



இயேசு கிறிஸ்துவின் நாமத்தில் அன்பின் வாழ்த்துக்கள்

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Why God Why? Why, when our need
is desperate, when all other help is in vain,
do you turn away from us?

Why? Why, when the darkness is deepest
and our midnight is starless,
do you hide yourself from us?

Why, in times of grief and distress,
when there is no light in the window,
do we find a door slammed in our face,
and a sound of bolting and
double bolting on the inside?

Why forsake us when we need you most?
Why are you present when the skies are clear,
our help in days of prosperity,
but so absent in our time of trouble?

WHY?
GOD?
WHY!

**Dedicated
to the memory of
my beloved son
MICHAEL JOB
whom I will meet
in joyous Eternity**

**I have written
this book
in tears
to wipe away
your tears**

WHY? GOD? WHY!

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by **Dr. P.P. Job**

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PREFACE

**What has happened
to me
has really served
to advance
the Good News.**

- St. Paul (Philippians 1:12)

PREFACE

Today, the 21st of March 2000 as I begin writing this book, the American President has an appointment with a young widow, Mrs. Rachana Katyal. The meeting has been fixed for 7:00 pm at the Maurya Sheraton hotel in New Delhi. Mrs. Rachana Katyal is just 18 years old. She was married to Mr. Rippan Katyal. The couple went for their honeymoon to Nepal. A fortnight later they were on their way to India on Flight IC-814. Rippan Katyal never reached home. Their flight was hijacked by Pakistani militants who force landed the plane first in Amritsar, then in Islamabad, Dubai and finally at Kandhar airport in Afghanistan. The hijack lasted for 173 hours, from 24th – 31st December 1999, the longest in Indian history. Rippan Katyal was knifed to death at the Raja Sansi airport in

Amritsar by the militants for daring to disobey the hijackers. His wife did not know of her husband's death until the hijack was over.

On the same day at a place called Chittisinghpura in Jammu & Kashmir, a state in North India, 35 men belonging to the Sikh community were called outside their homes and shot dead in cold blood by a group of militants. The television splashed the gory details of the massacre and showed the thirty-five bodies kept in a row. Beside every body there was a group of women and children wailing for their dear ones. Some were widows, some sisters and some mothers of the dead men.

On 23rd January 1999, Hindu fanatics burned Australian missionary Graham Staines and his two young sons Timothy and Philip alive. I heard the news while I was preaching on St. Thomas Mount,

Chennai, the tomb of another martyr, St. Thomas. Timothy and Philip were not preachers of the Gospel, only two innocent children of a preacher.

On 29th October 1999, the state of Orissa was lashed by a super cyclone causing total devastation of the state. Whole families were wiped away. Millions died. Thousands lost their dear ones. An equal number were left homeless. The state and the country are yet to recover from the ravages of the cyclone.

The 20th century was witness to one of the worst bloodbaths in the history of the world when the Nazis led by Hitler systematically butchered 6 million Jews in an effort to annihilate the Jewish community.

I have worked for the last 30 years with the Voice of Martyrs, a mission founded

by Rev. Richard Wurmbrand, a Jew, belonging to the erstwhile Communist state of Romania. Our mission works in Communist nations all over the world helping persecuted Christians, taking relief material to the countries, helping parents, widows and the children of the martyrs. I have come across many people who have been tested in the fire of suffering and all the people have asked the same question. Why God Why? Why did You do this to me?

I have been shocked by the instances of suffering I have heard and read, distressed at the sufferings I have witnessed and grieved at the tragedies that have befallen people. To an extent I have shared in the torment of the sufferers. I have comforted them and shared their sorrows.

But on the night of 20th June 1999 my younger son, Michael, 21 years of age,

a third year medical student of Himalaya Institute of Medical Sciences, Dehra Dun, Uttar Pradesh was killed in a hit and run accident. It happened because I am a preacher of the Word of God. I was shattered. There are no words to describe the pain I went through. Grief threatened to drown me and my heart wrenched with emotion as I stood beside the body of my son. I was inconsolable. And I too asked the question - Why God Why?

This is the question asked by all whenever misfortune and tragedies have crossed their path.

Why God Why? - is also a question asked several times in the Bible:

The book of Job, the first book to be written in the Old Testament recounts the life of a man called Job devastated by misfortune and curses. Job asks this

question after suffering the loss of his children and possessions and being plagued with disease.

The prophet Habakkuk from Israel questioned God when he witnessed the suffering of his own people.

This is the question that Jesus Christ asked God his Father before he died on the cross.

This is a universal question. The only difference is the level of intensity involved in asking the question depending on the degree of suffering one is going through. When unexpected misfortune strikes others, we too question God, on their behalf. But the intensity is less as compared to the time when we ourselves are involved in the suffering. The intensity also differs when misfortune is expected and when it is unexpected. When an old man dies, it

is expected but when a youth dies it is unexpected and considered tragic.

As I sit and think about my son the natural question that comes to mind is. 'Why God Why?' Why did You take him so early when he could have touched so many more lives and done so much more to glorify Your name? I have struggled with myself and with God's Will at certain times in life when I sorely miss the ever-loving presence of my son.

At these moments a deeper sense touches me, assures and comforts me, telling me that the complete answer to my questions will be revealed only on the day when I meet my Lord. For it is written in the Bible, *'Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully.'*

— 1Corinthians 13:12

Along with this assurance come certain answers that have comforted me. I will share them with you in the following chapters since problems, misfortunes and tragedies are universal and some answers I have received may help you to overcome the challenges of life you are facing in your own life.

MEMORIES OF MICHAEL

TREASURED RECOLLECTIONS: Dr. P. P. Job (father)

My second son, Michael Job, was the victim of a hit and run accident on the night of 20th June 1999. He lay in a coma for six days and went to be with the Lord on 26th June 1999. He was 21 years old and a budding doctor in his third year of medical college. He was killed by fanatics while taking a walk with his friends outside his college campus.

A handsome boy, he was brilliant and talented. His passion for singing enveloped both Gospel and secular music while his oratory powers made him an emphatic and inspiring preacher. A sensitive boy, always with a listening ear for anyone who needed help, he

touched the hearts of many during his short life on this earth.

On his death many of our friends came to us, shaken, bewildered, angry and asking the same question - 'Why God Why?' I especially remember a telephone call from a lady who told me, "I have just seen the charming photograph of your son in the newspaper. I have also lost my only son to leukemia. I don't believe in a God who allows such things". I had no answer to give them as I was also going through similar feelings. But being a staunch believer in Jesus' Christ, I opened my Bible. Knowing that the Word of God is the only place to search for an answer to this act of God, I skimmed the pages and came upon the letter written by St. Paul to the church of Philippians. My eyes rested on verse 12 of the 1st chapter *'What has happened to me has really served to*

advance the Good News'. I got my answer. I was greatly comforted that my son's death had not been in vain. God had given him to us as a gift and God had used him to further the message of the Gospel.

MICHAEL - THE TEACHER

Michael was my teacher. As a child he was a keen observer and would state his views with great conviction. Being the son of an evangelist he was interested in accompanying me wherever I preached. When he was six years old, on the morning of Good Friday I had two preaching assignments. The first was in a CSI church at Lady Hardinge Hospital, New Delhi - the Church of South India (CSI) is a dominant Christian denomination in India. Soon after, I was to preach in Jerusalem Mar Thoma Church, the parish I attend, in Safdarjung Enclave, New Delhi. The two

places were 10 kms apart and as I was traveling to give my first sermon I looked down at my son and realized that he was one common face I saw at all my sermons. I wondered how boring it would be for a six year old to hear nearly the same things over and over again since my preaching generally revolved around sharing my testimony and my experiences in the Lord. So I decided that day to give a different sermon for the benefit of my son. My message therefore revolved around the fact that anyone who believes in the blood of Jesus Christ shed on Good Friday on Calvary will receive redemption, justification, and sanctification.

After this message as we were traveling to my church to give my second sermon, Michael was sitting quietly with a thoughtful expression on his face. Soon he broke his silence and with the directness of a six year old said, "Dad

you preached a very theological message today. I didn't understand it at all". I was rather taken aback since I had changed my message so that it would be more interesting for him and told him so. He replied, "Don't preach that sermon in our church". I then asked him, "I always give my testimony in my messages. Is it not a repetition?" I was amazed at his reply. He said, "I have heard your sermons and your testimony many times and every time you speak you bring a new dimension to it. I have seen people crying and repenting with tears rolling down their cheeks when they hear your testimony". I wondered at his perception of the effect of my sermon on other people. I did not even know from where he learnt the word 'dimension'. He realized that this explained the power of God more than any theological message.

MICHAEL - THE BELIEVER

Years ago my family and I were taking a direct flight from California to New York by TWA. It was a four-hour flight in a Jumbo Jet carrying about 400 people and we were traveling in Economy class. Like any other child Michael was curious about everything he came across. His unending questions about the aircraft culminated in wanting to see the First Class and the cockpit. I explained that people sitting in the Economy Class were not allowed into the First Class cabin. There were millionaires sitting there and he should be grateful that a poor Indian family like us got the opportunity to fly in a plane. Seeing his distress I added that he being a small child could request the airhostess to show him the First Class and the cockpit.

Using a child's logic he asked me, "In

all your sermons you have said that the whole world belongs to God, He is the Creator and we are His children then how can these ladies stop me from seeing the First Class". I was stumped.

Michael went ahead and asked the airhostess but was refused permission. He came back crying and told me, "Dad you should stop preaching that everything in the world belongs to God who is our Father. It is not true".

As we neared our destination our flight was delayed due to heavy thunderstorm in New York. Many flights were cancelled and so was our TWA flight to London, which we were supposed to take that day. The Airlines apologetically offered to put us up in a hotel for two days since there was no possibility of seats till then. I was scheduled to speak at a church in London the next day and did not know

what to do. I explained the situation to the counter clerk at the airport and requested her to try her best to put us on some flight to London. After checking all the flights she came up with four seats in First class in British Airways. When I told her that I did not have the money to pay for First class she brushed it aside and told me, "I did not ask for any money", and soon we were winging our way to London in First Class! The gravity and irony of the situation struck me only when Michael turned to me and said, "Now I know everything belongs to our Father in heaven. You can tell everyone that".

Michael was a bundle of restless energy and at the age of nine I bought him a bicycle. He was thrilled and would go everywhere on it and took good care of it. However, one day in his hurry he left the cycle in front of the gate and went up to his room on the first floor. When

he went back to get his bicycle it had disappeared. Somebody stole it from the front of our house. He was heart broken and I was angry with him for his carelessness. As a punishment I told him I would not buy him another bicycle. He was very sad and began to pray about it. One morning he told me about a dream that he had where Jesus came down from Heaven and gave him a bicycle. He began to pray even harder after that.

A month after he told me about his dream, Rev. Tom White, our present director in America came to India with his daughter Dorothy and stayed in our home. She was a young girl who distributed newspapers using her bicycle in her locality in America. At the end of her stay she wanted to give Michael something with the \$100 she had since they had become good friends. She told me about her intention to buy him a

bicycle and I was amazed at the ways of the Lord. When Michael saw his shiny new bicycle he yet again realized the power of the Lord and he acknowledged, "God always does what he promises".

MICHAEL - THE ANIMAL LOVER

One day when Michael was ten, he brought home a puppy that one of his friends had given him. He named her Sheena. I am terrified of dogs since I had nearly died after being bitten by a rabid dog when I was young. I asked him, "Why have you brought this puppy?" He replied with all earnestness, "I am the youngest and neither you, nor Mom or John will obey me. Only this dog will listen to me and obey me". He then gave us a demonstration by ordering Sheena to shake hands, to sit, and to fetch. Sheena obeyed all his commands and Michael's face glowed

with pride and happiness. Seeing his joy I gave him permission to keep the dog but told him, “You are so happy because you have someone who will obey you. Just imagine how happy your parents would be if you always obeyed them”.

Michael and Sheena were very close. Sheena is still with us. When Michael died Sheena did not eat for several days and within a few days, her shiny black hair became grey.

Michael also had a fish tank. He had especially brought the fish from Madras and devotedly cleaned the tank, fed the fish and even talked to them. The moment he died, at 10:05 pm, one big fish in the tank also died. He was always an animal lover and we now realize the uncanny relationship he shared with his pets.

MICHAEL - THE PREACHER

Michael was always firm about his convictions because he believed in what he stood for. He placed his trust entirely on Jesus Christ. When he joined medical college he was the only Christian among five hundred students. He was also a practicing Christian who told others my testimony, taught them choruses praising God, distributed Bibles and gave sermons. Most of his classmates came to know about Jesus through him. He was unashamed to tell others about the poor background his father came from and the love and power of Jesus Christ which transformed him. He challenged everyone through the depth of his trust.

During the three years of his medical studies I remember one of the debates he participated in because of the appreciation he got, for the stand he took. The topic was, "Can an honest

doctor survive in a dishonest society?" He did not win the prize but he won the hearts and admiration of his professors. I am quoting his debate, published in various magazines after his death. I would like to share his thoughts with you.

*Honourable judges,
Respected Principal sir,
Respected teachers and my dear friends,*

Can an honest doctor survive in the present atmosphere of dishonesty?

The answer is a BIG yes

It is a questionable condition that plagues all of us earthly beings. For days on end contemplating upon this condition I decided to come to a pleasant decision of becoming a doctor.

The medical profession is a unique profession in which one deals with God's creation that is human lives. Not just a

body, but a person with a whole body, mind and soul. A doctor's touch is next to God's touch, a healing touch. No other profession has such a huge responsibility being placed on them. The people whom we are treating have placed their lives in our hands. In such a position to be untrue in what we do is the most immoral decision in our lives. The decision is a matter of integrity.

It is we as individuals who make the present society and I would take a doctor to be one of the main tools in moulding a society, because no matter how powerful, how rich or how famous a person would become, at some point of time we see him knocking at a doctor's door begging him to save his life. Do you think that his worldly pleasures do count?

We all know that being honest is not an easy decision. Yet all religions be it

Christianity, Hinduism, Islam or Buddhism have placed honesty on their highest list of priorities.

Corrupt practices will surely give instant results but soon his/her practice would catch up with them and can totally ruin their career. All the people who have actually succeeded are people who have shown complete determination, hard work and perseverance and have come to achieve fame and high positions. The decision to be honest can be a costly one but in the long run, it is only honesty and self sacrifice that pays.

It is like the grapes that are picked from the vine, some are rotten, some infested by pests and some turn out to be the best which grab a great demand in the market.

You have to ask yourselves whether you would opt to be treated by a doctor who is dishonest or for a matter of fact

whether any dishonest person would like to be treated by a doctor of his kind.

The poor have no choice. But others would always go for an honest doctor unless in an emergency where one is left with no other choice in hand.

Even after all this if an incompetent doctor decides to be dishonest he would be a great danger to the public and moreover to himself. With increasing awareness of medico legal litigation the possibility of compensation can lead the doctor to financial disaster. In India, the penalty for unethical practices has not yet reached a stage as in developed countries but soon it will do so.

A fish lies in the salty sea but it does not become salty. A doctor living in a dishonest society does not mean imbibing all the vices that are prevalent. A small boy, born in Blendair, United Kingdom, had dedicated his life to serve

the people of Malawi in Africa. But the cruel and dishonest people had made his life miserable because he was a white man. He came to this earth without anything but went by winning the hearts of the people of Malawi. That young man is known to us as Dr. David Livingstone. The name of the city where Dr. Livingstone worked in Malawi was changed to Blendaire after the name of his village in UK, in his memory. His body was buried in Westminster Abbey.

I would like to pause and bring your attention towards a patient suffering from renal failure who got himself operated by two doctors practicing in the suburbs in New Delhi. A year later he was found dead, with one of his kidneys missing.

The two doctors had gained money, which bought them a lavish kind of living by certain malpractices and

finally at the peak of their success they found themselves behind bars. They also gained fame in all the leading newspapers but in a different way. Their malpractices were highlighted in front of the whole public.

I would like to end by quoting a verse from the Holy Bible, which might guide you, 'God can summon unexpected reinforcement to help His people. Believe that He is between you and your difficulty and what troubles you would flee before Him as clouds in heaven.'

MICHAEL - THE DREAMER

Michael had many premonitions during his life. Even when he was six years old he would wake in the middle of the night in a sweat, crying. We would rush to his room, hug him and ask what the matter was. He would say, "I don't want to grow up. I will die if I grow up".

During his childhood he got such dreams frequently. We were rather worried but we prayed with him assuring him of God's protection. But he would tell us, "You will realize when I die". As he grew up the frequency of these dreams lessened until it stopped altogether.

A month before his Homegoing, Michael came to us with a dream which we found rather amusing at that time. In his dream he was surrounded by priests and bishops and was being ordained as a Bishop by Rt. Rev. Dr. Joseph Mar Irenaeus, one of the bishops of the Mar Thoma Church, headquartered in Kerala, to which I belong. In the dream, bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Joseph Mar Irenaeus was the Metropolitan - the highest office in the Mar Thoma Church. He told me excitedly, "I will be the first Doctor Bishop."

Coincidentally, the Bishop was expected

to arrive in New Delhi the next day and Michael and I went to receive him at the airport. Michael related the dream to him too. The Bishop laughed and said, "Neither will you become a Bishop nor will I become the Metropolitan."

Michael's funeral was conducted by Rt. Rev. Dr. Joseph Mar Irenaeus - the Suffragan Metropolitan (He had barely become the Suffragan Metropolitan in May 1999). At the funeral Michael was surrounded by priests and Bishops of different denominations and as we sent him to his heavenly abode Michael's dream came true in a manner which none could have fathomed.

Rev. Richard Wurmbrand has written in 'Answer to Half a Million Letters' that '*God speaks through dreams*' and it is my firm belief that God was preparing Michael for his Homegoing.

On 24th March 1999, while my wife and I were in America celebrating Rev. Richard Wurmbrand's birthday at his residence, Michael came to my office in New Delhi. He had a few days off from college to prepare for his exams. Though it was a crucial time for his studies and we were not in town he came down to Delhi for the sole purpose of creating a photograph of his. Sitting in front of the computer he designed a photograph of himself waving from the clouds. After designing it, he sent a copy to my elder son John as a birthday gift. John was very upset as it showed Michael waving goodbye from the sky.

When we returned from America, we found this picture pasted in front of Michael's room. Though the picture was a bit eerie we appreciated the creativity that he depicted in designing the photograph. He was always very interested in creative work. He liked

helping in preparing cassettes and posters for my meetings. He designed the prayer card for my Calcutta Gospel Campaign in January 1999.

On 13th June 1999, a day after his birthday Michael came home, took the photograph from his room and pasted it on the door of my room. He told me, "Dad I think you should get this framed as a wall poster". At that time I did not pay much heed to his comment.

After his accident on 20th June he was airlifted on 25th June from the Himalaya Institute of Medical Sciences, Dehra Dun, to Apollo Hospital, New Delhi. I stood with the rest of his college friends outside the airport watching the chartered plane take off. I could not accompany him since there was no room in the aircraft. As the small plane reached the skies, the photograph of Michael waving from the clouds flashed

across my mind and I realized Michael was saying goodbye from the clouds.

Ten days before Michael's death I was greatly troubled by an experience that haunted me day after day. I was sitting on the sofa in my living room when suddenly I saw a coffin kept in front of me. It was neither a dream nor a vision. When I looked around I saw a body wrapped in a shroud on Michael's bed. I prayed about it but this experience gnawed at me time and again.

On 14th June, as I was traveling to the airport my car was stoned and I had a serious head injury. After this accident the dream stopped and I felt this was what the dream was all about. The Saturday after the accident, when close friends of ours, Mr. and Mrs. V Abraham, residents of Vasant Kunj, New Delhi came to visit us, I described the incident to them.

They too felt that the dream denoted my near brush with death. A week later the dream actually came true as Michael's body was carried out of our house. The only difference was, my son had replaced my body.

His death was a big blow to all his college mates. I realized this when I saw the overflowing tears and desperation in their eyes while Michael lay in a coma. Budding doctors learning the science of saving human lives but helpless in saving the life of their dear friend. They maintained a silent vigil outside the intensive care unit during the six days he lay in a coma. Each of them prayed that their friend's life be given back.

At his funeral it was as if the entire college had come to bid farewell to him. One of his friends witnessed, "Michael was not only our friend but was the angel of our college. We always turned to him

for advice whenever we were in trouble. Now whom do we turn to?" It was a humbling moment for us, his parents, to realize how much he had touched the lives of those around him.

Our family has overcome many trials and tribulations. Among them the worst was when my wife, Mary, was diagnosed with possible cancer. I had gone to Mumbai to make arrangements for our next Gospel Outreach Campaign to be held in February 1998. I had barely reached Mumbai when I received an urgent call from a senior colleague of Mary, Dr. Krishna Dhar who is now working at the Christian Medical Center, our free clinic for the people in the slums of New Delhi. She told me that Mary had undergone an examination, which clinically indicated cancer in its second stage. The news came as a severe shock to me. It was one of the worst days of our lives.

I phoned my elder son John and told him to send his mother to Mumbai on the earliest available flight. Mary reached Mumbai the very next day and we stayed at Methodist Home, Byculla. The tension was palpable and our sons were equally upset and worried. She was admitted to Tata Cancer Institute for a biopsy. While she was in the operating room I could feel the flames raging in and around me. I prayed, "God if you take my wife now my ministry for your kingdom will be over because I will have to concentrate more on my family". Miraculously the biopsy showed no cancer cells. But the doctor was not convinced and preferred to remove the lump. Thankfully the histopathological report was also negative. My wife and I firmly believe that it was the touch of God that healed her.

In 1997, I had a severe heart attack. I was flown to America and admitted to

George Washington University Hospital. The Tallium test and angiography showed that my main arteries were blocked. Due to the serious condition I was in, my brother-in-law, Mr. Thomas Koshy, who lives in Washington phoned my wife and told her the situation. My usually timid wife traveled all alone from New Delhi to Washington to be with me.

One day as we were sitting together and talking Michael said to me, "When Mom was diagnosed with cancer, Dad, you were so strong and when you had the heart attack Mom became very strong".

Through this book, we want to convey a message to you, Michael:

Michael, you have been taken away from us but look at us, we are strong in the faith that you are in a better place.

Goodbye dear Michael - till we meet on that beautiful shore!

SWEET MEMORIES:

Mrs. Mary Job (mother)

Michael, our second son, was a treasure. Jijo, as we affectionately called him, was like a daughter to me. He was extremely affectionate and caring, always concerned about my comforts, sharing the everyday experiences of his school, teachers and friends with me. Everyday when he returned from school, he would kick off his shoes, and lie down on the bed, with his feet on my lap, so that I could roll off his socks while he recounted all the happenings of the day. This was a daily habit and even after he was in college, when he came back for holidays, he would promptly occupy his favorite position with his feet on my lap.

But the most appealing side of Jijo's personality was his capability to make others laugh. He was always a very happy child and wanted to share his

MICHAEL



With Mother - Mary Job





The Proud Rider



With Sheena .

BIRTHDAYS



7th birthday



9th birthday



The 21st and last birthday – 12.06.1999



With family of P P Baby, Dr. Job's brother, USA



With family of Thomas Koshy, Mary Job's brother, USA



With family friends, Johnny and family, USA



With Mary's family



With Mrs Gwen Carpenter who gifted the guitar to him



With his brother John in Hong Kong, December 1998



· The Job family with Rev. Richard and Sabina Wurmbrand



In Tibet

happiness with everyone. He loved cracking jokes, playing pranks on others, making faces, being funny - anything to make people happy. One could never stay angry with him for long because he had such winning ways of cajoling.

Jijo knew that I was very fond of dogs and whenever I was angry or upset he would come and sit beside me cradling Sheena in his arms.

He also had a great sense of humor. I will never forget the time he made a big fool out of me. We stay in Green Park close to the Main Market of the area where a new departmental shop called D-Mart had opened. The day it opened he went and inspected the entire shop and returned to give me a graphic account of it. Very excitedly and in full earnestness he told me, "Mom they also have a section for pets. And guess what?

They have fluorescent shoes for dogs!” It was such an unbelievable story that I chided him for telling me such stories. He grinned and went away. Two days later both of us went to the same shop. After making our purchases, as we were leaving I asked him, “Jijo show me the place where they have the fluorescent shoes for dogs”. For a moment he looked at me, rather shocked. And then he burst out laughing. He was laughing so hard that even the shopkeepers turned to see what the matter was. I understood that he had merely been pulling my leg.

This incident became a standard joke in our family. Whenever relatives or friends dropped in he would relate the whole incident in such a comic style that they would have a hard time controlling their laughter.

Jijo was a great mimic. To add to this,

both my sons had similar voices. Often even I would confuse the two. When my elder son, John got married, his wife Mena, often called home from work to talk to him. Jijo would take her call and talk to an unsuspecting Mena as if he was John and only at the end of the conversation would he tell her the truth.

His pranks did not stop at his family. Sometimes when his friends called he would act as though he was the servant boy. (We have Nepali servants who speak in heavily accented Hindi.) He would tell them, "Master Jijo is not here. He has gone out." And just as they would say goodbye he would gleefully revert to his original voice.

Jijo also had a very tender heart. He was very kind to others. He would get upset at other people's distress. When he was young he got monthly pocket money from his father. One day a young boy

not much older than himself came asking for help. Jijo was so moved by his plight that he gave the beggar boy his pocket money.

One of his friends did not belong to a financially sound family. Jijo would bring him over to our house for the holidays and give him his clothes, shoes and other belongings. He did not like anyone to feel left out due to lack of material possessions and he tried to embrace everyone in his circle of love.

Jijo charmed everyone he met. The principal of his school (Laxman Public School), Mrs. Usha Ram was extremely fond of him. In his final school year, the school had organized a trip to Mauritius and we went to see him off at the airport. When we met Mrs. Ram there, she fondly told us, "Aren't you proud of your son?" Laxman Public School is a Hindu school. During his

tenure as the head boy, Jijo arranged a Christmas program for his school. From arranging a speaker for the program, to Christmas carols and even a Santa Claus – Jijo organized it all. During the farewell function of his final school year, we went to watch him receive the trophy for being the head boy. During dinner Mrs. Ram told us, “We got the star late”. (Jijo had joined Laxman Public School only a year before.)

Jijo also had a tremendous sense of responsibility. Apart from being the head boy in school he was also the Class Representative and the Mess Representative in his Medical College. The position of Class Representative placed on him the duty of meeting the Principal and discussing the students’ problems. Being the Mess Representative implied that he would provide the menu everyday and sort out

any problems regarding food.

Jijo was also very talented and he made full use of his talents. He had a strong voice and loved debating. He was also a good singer and in 1997 got the Best Singer Award in his college. He was a good sportsman with a great interest in Volleyball. He won a medal for being part of the winning team in his college.

12th June was Jijo's birthday. He came from Dehra Dun, the next day, to spend the day with us. We had guests at home so we could not shower much attention on him. After his Homegoing, while we were reminiscing, I recalled that Jijo had said, "Mom buy me whatever you want for my birthday or else you will later regret 'Oh! I wasn't able to give this to Jijo'." But on that score I have no regrets. By God's grace I could give him whatever he asked for.

Jijo also had a strong calling to serve the Lord. I remember the day he had to give an extempore speech in his school which he had barely joined in Class 11, and was rather nervous. Seeing his tense state, I read him a verse from the Bible which my father had told me on the day of my Class 10 examinations '*I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.*' – Philippians 4:13. That afternoon Jijo was very happy when he came back. He told me that the speech had gone off wonderfully and that he was able to deliver it with confidence because he kept repeating the verse to himself. Even on later occasions when he had to give speeches he relied on this verse for strength and confidence.

At a Teenage Fellowship he attended two years back; Jijo responded to an altar call and dedicated himself for Christian work. He came back from the

Retreat and told me, "I felt somebody pushing me from behind".

During the Christmas of 1998 Jijo was in Hong Kong along with his brother and family. He attended Watch night service at a gathering where he witnessed the power of the Lord through his father's testimony. Impressed with the intensity of Jijo's speech an old missionary couple told him, "Your father's mantle will be on you and you will become a great preacher with healing power". That very night he called us up and recounted what the old couple had told him. He wondered whether he was in the correct profession. It troubled him that if he was meant to work for the Lord, he was wasting his time in the Medical College. We reassured him that by becoming a missionary doctor he would be fulfilling the task of working for the Lord as well as healing people. Jijo appeared convinced at the time but

I was distressed that maybe he wanted to do more for the Lord before his Homegoing. When I voiced this feeling to some of our Christian friends, they consoled me saying, "He is still touching lives and healing people through that last photograph he designed of himself waving from the clouds".

I got the proof of this amid the letters of condolence we received after Jijo's Homegoing. Mrs. Nellie Brobbel, the wife of our Mission Director in Canada wrote, "*Our son Floyd, called me from work a few minutes ago and suddenly said, 'Are you in touch with brother Job? Just tell him that I have Michael's picture hanging in my office at work. When he died, something touched my heart and I felt that others should know about him. Ever since that picture was put there, many co-workers have asked me about him. So I have the opportunity to tell them who Michael*

was, what he believed and why he died. It makes a big impression on them and it is a powerful witness. God has ways to use Michael's death far beyond India and in somebody's workplace here in Canada'."

A regular reader of our magazine, Tortured for Christ, wrote, "I had a dream in which I saw a young boy smiling and waving his hand while crossing a bridge. He was bleeding from his head. One side of the bridge was filled with thorns and rocks whereas on the other side there was bright light and beautiful flowers. I got up and wondered what the dream signified. The very next day I received 'Tortured for Christ' and was shocked to see the same photograph which I had seen in my dream".

Mr. Warmolt, a brother in Canada, and an ex-ship captain, has made this photograph in the shape of a bookmark

which he uses for his ship evangelism. I rest in the knowledge that Jijo is touching more lives in his death than during his life.

The last Sunday he attended church was in May 1999. After the service, as we were returning home Jijo told his father, 'Dad I want to preach in church. I won't tell you earlier what I shall speak but I want to give the message in church one day. My husband assured Jijo that the next time he came home, he would speak to the pastor and arrange for him to speak in the church. But sadly, that was not to be.

Soon after the funeral, my brother and I went to Jijo's hostel to collect his belongings. It was very clear that Jijo proclaimed his faith to all when one entered his room. On the door of his room he had pasted a handwritten message which read, '*A Known God*

but an unknown future. His room was filled with pictures that had inspiring messages such as, *'Lord help me to remember that nothing is going to happen to me today that you and I together can't handle.'* A few of his classmates showed the copies of the New Testament that Jijo had presented to them. Another friend who had started reading the New Testament asked for the cross that was hanging on the wall of Jijo's room. We feel reassured that he lived according to his faith and sowed the seeds of faith wherever he went. May the Lord Almighty help those seeds to grow.

While I was still grappling with the void created by his death and asking God - *'Why God Why?'* I came across two passages in a book sent to me by one of Jijo's friends, from New York, *'God only plucks out of this world those He can no longer love at a distance.'*

(p. 154, 'Have You Felt Like Giving Up Lately' by David Wilkerson)

Don't think of your trial as judgment from God. Don't go about condemning yourself, as though you have brought down upon yourself some dreaded penalty for failure. Stop thinking, "God is making me pay for my sin." Why can't you see that what you are going through is a result of His love? Are you being chastened? Do you feel as if you are being dragged down? Are you in pain? Are you suffering? Good! This is the evidence of His love toward you. Submit! Take up your cross! Be prepared to go down even more. Get ready to reach your crisis. Get ready to reach the end of yourself. Be prepared to hit bottom!

Please understand you are in Christ's own school of discipleship. Rejoice that you are going to become weak in order

to experience His overpowering strength in you.

He laid His cross down; why won't you? For Him, a Simon appeared. For us, a Savior appears. We get up and go on. Its still our cross, but now its on His shoulders'. - (p. 31, 'Have You Felt Like Giving Up Lately' by David Wilkerson)

My earnest prayer is that the Lord touch the people directly or indirectly concerned with our son's death, as Saul was touched.

So, dear Jijo, even though I miss your presence terribly I am assured that our loss is your gain and that the Lord is carrying us on His shoulders and I am happy to believe that when we meet in Heaven you will be that handsome young man forever and ever.

PRECIOUS MEMORIES:

John Job (brother)

I have very fond memories of my brother. He was always pleasant and cheerful and an ever-smiling person like my father. Our childhood together is etched in my mind. Even before he passed away my dreams at night were always about our childhood together. Whenever I saw a baby or a toddler, it would always remind me of my son but when I play with my three year old son he reminds me of my childhood with Michael.

There was an age difference of five years between Michael and I. In our early school years both of us went to the same school - Don Bosco. Michael entered Nursery school at Don Bosco when he was three and a half years old. I was then in middle school. Though in the same school we went to school in

different buses as the school had separate buses for junior and senior children fearing excessive bullying of the small children by the big boys.

But Michael was unhappy with his school. He could not talk to his classmates because he did not know English. We spoke Malayalam (my mother tongue - the language of Kerala) at home and Michael was comfortable only with that language. Since Delhi is a North Indian state the main languages spoken are English or Hindi. Not knowing either, Michael felt lonely and was teased and taunted by his own classmates. He usually came home with scratches on his face. He was miserable and afraid but could not say anything.

One day, I missed my school bus. Rather than go home to a scolding, I waited for the junior bus that came half an hour later. I pleaded with the driver



At the wedding of his brother John with Mena





As the Head Boy 1997 - delivering the Welcome speech and receiving the trophy at the Annual Day function



Winning an Awards at the School Annual day functions



With nephew Joshua and cousin Anita



Mr. & Miss Laxman – of Laxman Public School.



Along with other Award holders, Laxman Public School



singing at the Annual day 1998, Himalaya Institute of Medical Sciences.



Receiving the Best Singer Award in 1997
in his Medical College



the front row, center, of the Jerusalem Mar Thoma
church choir



With his best friends in college on his 21st birthday



Fun filled moments with his college friends on 19.06.1999, a day before the fatal accident

... in design in 1990

1990





of Michael's bus to let me travel in the junior bus. With great reluctance the driver agreed on the condition that I sit quietly on the last seat and not talk to anyone.

That day as the children geared up to tease Michael they saw a transformation in him. My normally quiet and submissive brother suddenly became a lion ready to fight them. The children were wonderstruck when Michael rolled up his shirtsleeves and challenged them to a fight. No one knew that the boy sitting quietly on the last seat was his brother and Michael was using him as a shield. After that day, the other boys who never came to know the exact reason for Michael's transformation stopped teasing him altogether.

From that day, there was a great change in Michael. I realized later that it was on that day that Michael learnt that one has

to be strong in mind more than in body to survive in the world. That is how he lived, taking on challenges as they came meeting them head-on and overcoming them.

CHERISHED MOMENTS: **Mena Job (sister-in-law)**

One night John and I hit upon a plan to get even with Michael. We were both spending the night on the sofas in the living room as the house was undergoing renovation. While I sat on one sofa pretending to be a little mad, John took Michael aside and told him that I had a condition for which I took medication at night. John also mentioned that the medicine was over and that he had to go out and buy some more, and while he was gone could Michael keep an eye on me to see that nothing went wrong. No sooner had Michael agreed to do

so, than John went on to elaborate on my condition. He told him how my teeth got enlarged and I suffered such pain that I needed to bite someone to ease the pain. He then proceeded to show a couple of scars on his hands. We still laugh when we remember Michael's desperate questions as to how John married a monster and as to what Dad would say about all this. But what took the cake was his question, "What if she bit me?." "Well, that's a risk you have to take" was John's flippant answer and with that he left a trembling Michael to his devices. To make matters more interesting and for the trick to look realistic, I had attached two bits of corn to my front teeth, and each time I smiled at him, I looked hideous and threatening. Poor Michael, sat there pretending to be oblivious of my presence, but would keep glaring nervously at me and anxiously at the clock. Those were to be the longest and scariest 15 minutes

of his life. Suddenly John walked in and announced that all the chemists were closed for the day and that there was nothing he could do at that time of the night. A panic-stricken Michael rushed out to bring my father-in-law, who walked in looking sleepy and confused. In the meantime, John and I pretended to be asleep. My father-in-law was quite upset with Michael who was trying to convince him about what had happened but at one in the night, it made precious little sense. He scolded Michael for trying to avoid studying and ordered him not to get up from his chair until he had finished studying. Soon after my father-in-law left, John and I got up and advanced towards Michael. John told him that since he nearly gave away the secret of my madness, he had no choice but to let me bite him. But, we had to quickly call off the joke when we realized that the Job household was in danger of having a shattered flower vase and a

daughter-in-law with shattered teeth. He always vowed to get even with me but...

Michael was a very handsome boy and he always kept himself well groomed. Very often, he would come to me for help with his hair and skin. I've spent many moments clowning around with his new products, styling his hair and giving him facials, but the most amusing moment was when he convinced me that he wanted a makeup done for his school farewell party. He said that most of his friends went to the saloons to get it done since this was a special occasion. It was great to learn that his efforts got him the 'Mr. Laxman Public School' title.

These and many other fun-filled moments will always be cherished, but for John and me, the most touching memory of Michael is our last Christmas that we spent with Michael in Hong Kong. On our part, we did everything

to fulfill his every desire. Since it was Michael's first holiday on his own, we wanted it to be special. Sadly, we weren't to know that it would be his last. It was also the last time that my son Joshua and I saw him. For Joshua, "Jijo Uncle" as he was addressed, is still in Hong Kong. Whenever he remembers the trip to Hong Kong or when we go through the photographs that we had taken on our trip, Joshua would say, "Mamma, let's go to Hong Kong and eat octopus with Jijo Uncle". It is easy to see why he would rather remember him that way.

His death was so sudden and tragic that it was almost unreal. Whenever I go back to Delhi, its as if Michael is still in college. And any day you expect to hear him running up the stairs and banging on the door in the early hours of the morning. Then I remember him in the ICU and later how we all stood around

him to say goodbye and lay him to rest.
I can never say goodbye, not when
everyday brings another memory to
mind and every other night a dream. So
instead, Au revoir (till we meet again),
let there be angels around you, dear
Michael.

WAR

'I have fought the good fight...'

– 2 Timothy 4:7

A war brings to mind a battlefield, two opposing sides and a destructive situation leading to loss of life and material possessions. Throughout history men have tried to prove their superiority by waging wars against each other. The desire to overcome a person, a nation, a situation or an emotion creates a conflict leading to war. Analyzed at a basic level, life is a war. Every situation one is faced with, has two sides and there is a war every moment in the brain about every action. We have wars between persons, families, communities and nations and this fight continues until our last breath.

Religion is a path created by man to

know the difference between right and wrong, good and bad, true and false. God is at the center of every religion; the Creator, the omnipresent, omniscient figure who is the Beginning and the End. The struggle in life arises out of the dichotomy between the desires of man in this temporary life and the Truth shown to all by God, which brings the promise of eternal life.

In the second letter to Timothy, Chapter 2:4-6, St. Paul equates every believer in God with an athlete, soldier or farmer. All his letters are centralized on these three professions. He completes his 2nd letter on the note: *'I have fought a good fight (as a soldier), I have finished a good race (as an athlete), I have kept the faith (as a farmer). Now the crown of righteousness is waiting for me.'*

— 2 Timothy 4:7

At many times in life we come to a

standstill due to the problems surrounding us. We become weak and tired. The way of the world is so much easier and many of us fall into the trap of worldliness. Let me recount the story of a brave Indian soldier. During the Indo-Pakistan war of 1971, a young fighter pilot was assigned a potentially dangerous area to bomb. His aircraft was shot down right at the border between India and Pakistan. In the cover of darkness, the pilot escaped from the hostile grounds, but he lost his left arm. His handicap forced him to retire from the Air force but before his retirement he pleaded to his General for a second bombing run to hit his primary bombing targets. His tenacity and bravery touched the General and he was granted that privilege. Even with the incurred disability the young brave pilot successfully bombed and completed the mission. During a lifetime we are faced with many challenges when it always

seems better to take the easier way out. When I lost Michael it was equivalent to the loss of an arm but my mission will continue powerfully with what is left.

An often asked question both by believers and non-believers is “Why do believers suffer more than those who do not believe in God at all?” The people who sacrificially devote their lives for the glory of God, for the service of the people and the betterment of humanity meet with more obstacles, miseries and tragedies than do most lay people. Several believers are disappointed in their faith because they cannot understand why God acts with such ‘prejudice’ against those who seek to do His Will.

My answer lies in the following illustration. One day, a hunter went into the jungle with his son to catch something for a meal. While he was

hunting birds several died but a few were injured and were writhing on the ground and trying to fly away. The man ordered his son who was given the task of collecting the dead birds to collect the injured birds first. The young boy thought his father to be very foolish in going after the few birds that were not yet dead than in collecting the birds that were dead. He told his father, "Dad why bother about those birds who are escaping when we have so many birds who are dead?" The father explained to the boy, "These birds which are dead will not go anywhere. They belong to us. But the ones that are trying to pick up their strength and fly away are the ones that we must catch. Only then will our mission be successful".

This is how the Devil functions. The people who have already died to sin and who do not care or acknowledge the presence of God are already the Devil's

property. He is not bothered with them. He is worried about those who believe in God and are trying to get away from the Devil's grasp. He gives them problems, creates obstacles in their path, and showers them with misery so that their faith in God is destroyed, their Spirit is broken and they turn to him.

I have faced many such obstacles from the Devil. The most recent test by the Devil in my life began on 4th December 1998 when Christians in New Delhi, the capital of India, held a protest Rally. A huge crowd gathered on Parliament Street to protest against the increasing persecution of Christians in India. The gathering comprised of Bishops, clergymen, Christian leaders and laymen. Being a Christian leader I was also among the protestors. There were short speeches by several Bishops and other leaders after which the official leaders left to submit a memorandum to the

Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Bihari Vajpayee. I looked around to see more and more people coming to the meeting to show their solidarity towards Christians. Many people who came from the outskirts of Delhi were just reaching the meeting. The gathered people were also getting restive as they came to realize the full extent of persecution in India from the speeches they heard.

Though I was not on their list of official speakers I found myself pushed onto an open jeep for a speech. As the momentum built up I started a song, which has stirred people all over the world, 'We shall overcome'.

The Apostle St. John wrote the words of this song while he was on Patmos Island. He has written these words in all the seven letters he wrote from the Patmos Island and in the 2nd and 3rd chapters of the book of Revelation.

Martin Luther King, the great Black leader, gave a tune to these words and used it as a chorus to inspire Black Americans to fight for their rights. This is a very popular song in India too and is even taught in schools to young children. People joined me boldly and enthusiastically. Two women standing near me shouted, "Don't sing someday. Let us sing today". So we sang, 'We shall overcome today'. This song, which we sang both in English and Hindi, roused the people and gave the masses a sense of unity. I then made a short speech to the gathering. My impromptu speech focused on three points:

Where there is crucifixion and suppression, there is resurrection and revival. I gave an example from the present political scenario of India. The President of India, Mr. K R Narayanan, was first elected as a Member of

Parliament from the constituency where I come from. He belongs to a low caste in South India. Caste system is still followed in India especially in villages. In Hindu religion, low caste people never had a chance to progress. They were not preferred in schools or universities. High caste groups like Brahmins strictly forbade them from entering their homes and did not even give them water in their utensils. In fact, they discouraged anyone who did not belong to their caste to come to their homes.

One day my friends and I were playing in our village grounds. It was very hot and humid and I got very tired. I went up to the first house near the playground and asked for a glass of water. I was surprised when they did not invite me into the house but brought out a jug of water, told me to cup my hands and poured water into them. I drank from my folded palms. I realized then that I

had gone to a Brahmin house. I did not belong to a low caste yet this was the treatment meted out to me.

Low caste people had to face severe humiliation in India. In these circumstances Mr. K R Narayanan's rise to the position of first citizen as the President of India is a wonder and is the proof that where there is crucifixion and suppression there is resurrection. As long as Mr. Narayanan is at the position of President the people of India are witnesses to the power of resurrection - the power of resurrection of an individual and of a community. The whole of India looks up to him and even the high caste Brahmins respect him. Brahmin ministers take the oath in the Parliament by repeating the words of Mr. Narayanan. Even though Mr. Narayanan is not a baptized Christian, his courage, wisdom and sense of justice make him more than an

active Christian. Mr. Narayanan inaugurated our Christian Medical Centre, in Kalkaji, which provides free medical treatment for slum people. He stands today as an example that resurrection occurs where there is crucifixion. If Christians are being persecuted, then a time of resurrection and revival will come soon.

The second part of my speech focused on the statements made by few Hindu leaders that all Christians should go to America since Christianity is imported from America. I have nothing against people going to America. It is a land of opportunity especially for people from the Third World. Almost every Indian wishes to go there if the American government would only issue visas for them!! Even the Prime Minister, Chief Ministers and the ministers of the Cabinet go to America for treatment of their illnesses. But I take exception to

the statement that the whole Christian community be *sent* to America on the grounds that Christianity is an import from the West. Is the Christian community any less an Indian community? Does practicing the Christian religion make one less of an Indian? This appears to be the stand taken by a volatile section of the Hindu political wing. Christians are viewed with a lot of suspicion and are treated as if they belong to the CIA - the Central Intelligence Agency of America. A similar situation arose in Uganda when Iddi Amin killed Christian pastors thinking they belong to the CIA.

Hundreds of Christian pastors were also ruthlessly massacred due to the same suspicion in Ethiopia while it was under Communist regime for 14 years. Many of these martyrs did not even know that a country like America existed.

I told the listening crowd, “Several people have thought me to be a member of the CIA. During one of my Gospel Campaigns in Pathanamthitta, in Kerala, posters were stuck on walls with a caricature of me standing in the palms of the then President George Bush, wearing an American flag for a tie, a hat and preaching the American religion of Christianity! But, I am proud of being identified with the CIA because for me CIA stands for ‘Christian in Action’.”

In the final part of the speech I tried to clear the myth about Christianity being an alien religion. Many people are under the misunderstanding that Christianity is a foreign religion, that it has been imported from the West and will destroy the Indian culture. Christians are viewed with a jaundiced eye, as second-rate citizens who have succumbed to the wiles of the West.

The truth about Christianity in India is that it came to India much before the American continent was even discovered. The American continent was discovered only 200 years ago while Christianity came to India 2000 years ago. The message of the Gospel was brought to India by St. Thomas, one of the twelve disciples of Jesus Christ. St. Thomas came to my hometown of Kerala, in AD-52 to spread the message of the Gospel and was martyred in AD-72 in Chennai. The Christian church established by St. Thomas is called the St. Thomas church, and it survives even today. I am a member of that church. The famous traveler Marco Polo in his book about his travels, has mentioned visiting Kunnankulam (my birthplace), in Kerala, and seeing St. Thomas Christians there!

The British also did not propagate

Christianity during their rule in India. In fact, they did not even give permission to William Carey, a missionary, to work in India. Therefore, even before Europe heard the Gospel or Prophet Mohammed was born, Christianity was intrinsically woven into the fabric of the Indian ethos. If the importance of a religion is in ratio to its chronology then Christianity is an eastern religion!

The Christian population in India, at present, has decreased from 3% to 2% of the entire population. This is proof of the fact that we have not converted people's religions but have only changed people's minds. We change people to have the mind of Jesus and nobody can stop this change because it is an abstract experience.

I added, "If the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) continues to persecute Christians the next Prime Minister will be a

Christian". Members of the political parties who were present at the meeting thought I was indirectly lobbying for Mrs. Sonia Gandhi to be the Prime Minister. A day after the meeting, an atheist Marxist reporter (in India, all Marxists are not atheists) wrote in his newspaper that I was a supporter of Mrs. Sonia Gandhi. This statement made the BJP officials even more furious.

The logic of my speech seemed to have touched the hearts of many and it received a thunderous applause. Soon after returning home from the meeting I began receiving threatening calls. The anonymous callers threatened to kill me if I did not stop preaching. This lasted for some days. When they realized these threats were not having the desired effect they threatened to wipe out my whole family. I did not respond to any of these threats and gradually the phone calls also stopped.

Six months later on 14th June 1999, I was traveling from my home to Indira Gandhi International Airport. I was scheduled to take the Singapore Airlines night flight to Indonesia to attend an International Conference. I left my house at 9:00 pm. I usually travel alone to the airport but that night I asked my friend's son who was staying with us for a few days, to accompany me. He was a medical doctor and had come to Delhi for an interview. When I suggested he accompany me, he said he was waiting for his father's telephone. Jokingly I told him, being a doctor he should see the International Airport at Delhi and he came along with me.

The airport is situated on the outskirts of Delhi and after crossing main residential areas we reached a long stretch of highway that is deserted and very dimly lit. Suddenly with a loud bang, the car window near which I was

sitting splintered and I felt a strong blow to my head. For a moment I did not know what had happened. On a reflex I put my hand to my head and felt blood flowing from it. Though startled by the sudden attack my driver had wisely speeded the car and we were well out of the attackers' reach. I was feeling the loss of blood, which had already drenched my clothes. We were miles away from any hospital and due to regular Aspirin intake my blood had become very thin and I was losing blood rapidly. The doctor at my side was helpless. He did not have anything to stop the blood that was gushing out like a fountain but using his ingenuity he tore the seat cover and used it as a tourniquet on my head. Holding my head still, we made it to the nearest hospital in 30 minutes where the doctors removed splinters from my scalp, injected tranquilizers and dressed the wound. The attending doctor said I was very

lucky to have another doctor sitting by my side at the time of the accident or else I would have died without first aid. He was an angel in my car.

I could not go to Singapore after this attack as I was advised rest. I realized that day that the enemy had not given up, but I was unfazed. Michael phoned as soon as he heard the news. He insisted I take a CT scan to ensure that there was no other permanent damage. My wife and I were so taken aback by the viciousness of the attack that we forgot to warn our children that they too could be in danger.

According to the compiled reports of students, on the evening of Sunday, 20th June 1999, at approximately 8:30 pm Michael and two of his friends were taking a walk outside the campus. A white Fiat car with Delhi number plates traveling at a high speed, changed lanes

diagonally from the right to the left, rammed into Michael and sped away without stopping. The force of the impact was so great that he was thrown into the air and landed on his head a few meters away. He suffered a broken leg but the most severe of his injuries was to his head. His brain stem was crushed and he went into a coma immediately. His shocked friends rushed him to the hospital where he was declared brain dead. However, since he was their student he was immediately hooked onto a ventilator. We reached his bedside within eight hours of the accident. Doctors told us there was no hope. My wife, herself a doctor, realized the situation as she saw him and read the reports of his head scans.

But we still had one thing with us - our faith. As word of the accident spread, believers all over the world began to pray for Michael's recovery. During the week

he was with us in a comatose state, he responded twice when my elder son and I called him by name. He raised his hands towards Heaven at both times. The students began distributing sweets all around convinced that Michael was coming around. His responses put the doctors in a dilemma. The doctors were divided about his condition. One group dismissed his responses as mere spinal reflexes while another group assured that he was improving. There was a conflict between science and faith. On the 25th, he was transferred to New Delhi where tests were again performed on him. In the end, on the night of 26th June 1999 at 10:05 Michael went to be with the Lord. I lost my son because science dominated faith. Not many doctors today believe that there is a force beyond science, that science does not provide the answer to all conditions. I lost Michael because his father was a preacher of the Word of God. I lost my

son for a lot of reasons but I lost my son for the most important reason - because it was God's Will. And I have survived the loss of my son for one reason alone - my faith in the Lord remains steadfast.

All through my life I have experienced war. I began my preaching on 1st May 1963. Barely a year later, on 14th May 1964 my father died of a heart attack. I was 18 years old and the whole burden of taking care of the family came on my shoulders. I had to fend for my mother and younger brother. Standing next to my father's dead body, I prayed for guidance. We were financially very poor. For years we lived a hand to mouth existence. It was literally a fight for survival and I was constantly assailed by doubts and questions. I often asked the question - 'Why God Why?' Why did you take my father at this point in life? Should I stop my preaching and

take up some other financially rewarding career? My mother smoothed away all the questions. She was a lady who was very strong in faith and told me not to give up preaching but to continue to minister about the power of God to people who have never experienced it. I went without food for many days, and soon began to spit blood. I had no money to buy medicines. Somehow through these days of ordeal we survived. And our faith survived and grew even stronger.

When I was a young Christian worker, I and 15 others were bitten by a rabid dog. The dog died soon after and we began to take anti-rabid inoculations. In those days the vaccine was a shot once a day for 14 days. Each day the number of persons coming for inoculations lessened and by the time I reached for the last injection, I was the only survivor. All the other 15 had died. I was very

apprehensive that I would die too. However, since I had been ministering God nearly all my life, I had the strong belief that God would not desert me. After the injection I went to my room, ate lunch and felt like visiting the toilet. Once there, I began to bark like a dog and soon lost consciousness. I had reached the stage where no medicine or doctor could help. My neighbors gathered and lifted the roof of the toilet, which was just a sheet of asbestos. They pushed me down with sticks and made sure that I was in no position to get up. They then tied my hands and legs together with my neck and carried me to my room where I was left to die. However, I soon regained consciousness without any medicine. It was a great miracle! My neighbors, who were convinced that I would die were amazed at my recovery. God protected and healed me.

Later in life I contracted severe jaundice. I was in a coma for four days. Miraculously I was awakened from the deadly disease. God has brought me out of difficult and impossible situations many a time. I have experienced His power several times in my life which has led to the firm belief that nothing is impossible for Him if it is in accordance with His Will. At all times when we are faced with unpleasant situations, dangers, sadness and despair the question that will come to mind is 'Why God Why?' The believer however, will always understand that *these* are the ways of God.

On this earth there are two powers fighting with each other. Sometimes God is victorious while at other times the Devil is victorious. These victories too are result of man's actions. It is God's victory when we remain resolute in our faith despite troubles, sufferings,

despair and gloom. It is the Devil's victory when our faith crumbles in the face of trauma and calamities. If we give the Devil a chance to take hold of our lives through small victories, he will gain more and more control over us until the day he will rule us completely. To resist the Devil and his wily ways we must concentrate on the promise made in the Bible, that one day when we have immortal life there will be no war because there will be no more suffering and no more pain. We will be in the presence of God without tears or sadness because there will be nothing else but the presence of God.

Nearly 200 years ago missionaries from England and Germany came to Northeast India to preach the gospel. One Welsh missionary converted a native man, his wife, and two children, whose spontaneous faith proved contagious. The angry village chief

summoned all the villagers, then asked the head of the family to renounce his faith in public - or face execution. Moved by the Holy Spirit, the man instantly composed and sang these celebrated lines:

*I have decided to follow Jesus.
No turning back, no turning back.*

Enraged, the chief ordered his archers to shoot the two children. As both boys lay twitching on the floor, the chief asked, "Will you deny your faith? You have lost both your children. You will lose your wife too". The man replied with these words:

*Though no one joins me, still I will
follow
No turning back, no turning back.*

The chief was beside himself with fury and ordered the wife to be shot. In a

moment she joined her two children in death. Now he asked for the last time, "I will give you one more opportunity to deny your faith and live. There is no one for you in the world". The man then sang the final memorable lines:

The cross before me, the world behind me.

No turning back, no turning back.

Everyone thought that with the death of the missionary Christianity would end in that tribe. But it was just the beginning, the Spirit was working; "Why should this man, his wife and two children die for a Man who lived in a far-away land on another continent some 2000 years ago?" the chief asked himself. "There must be some supernatural power behind the family, and I too want that supernatural power."

In a spontaneous confession of faith,

he declared, "I too belong to Jesus Christ!" When the crowd heard this from the mouth of their chief, the whole village accepted Christ as their Lord and Savior.

In my hometown of Kerala there is a native medicinal herb called 'Kurunthotti' which is used to cure all diseases, especially rheumatism. It is used often in the science of Ayurveda, which is a stream of medicine that provides natural treatment using herbs. There is an aphorism in my mother tongue, Malayalam; what will happen if the Kurunthotti itself gets rheumatism? How can it then be used to cure diseases?

Believers also face a similar situation. We have been given the light of the Gospel to heal the entire world. How can the travails of this world paralyze us? Our lives must be an example of

faith, love and courage despite the vagaries of life. All of us must make the promise to fight the Devil like a soldier, running the race of our lives like an athlete striving to win. Like a farmer who sows seeds on his land without knowing for certain whether the rain will come, we must keep our faith strong. If we keep this promise, then in spite of all the wars we are to face in our lives we will always be victorious - victorious in the Lord, our Creator and our Savior, who is waiting for us with the '*crown of righteousness*'. – 2 Timothy 4:8

PAIN

There is a book in the Bible called JOB. Fortunately or unfortunately, my parents also christened me Job. In my hometown Kerala, this is a very rare name. Most people prefer not to name their children Job because of the suffering that the biblical Job had to undergo.

The book of Job is the earliest book written in the Bible. It is a powerful testimony to all. It deals with experiences of untold suffering and pain and brings us to a greater understanding of God.

'There lived in the land of Uz a man of blameless and upright life named Job, who feared God and set his face against wrongdoing.' – Job 1:1

Job was a paragon of virtue. Job was also a man of great wealth. In addition to a large family comprising a wife, seven sons, three daughters, he had a vast estate of 7000 sheep, 3000 camels, 1000 oxen, 500 she-donkeys 'together with a large number of slaves'.

'...thus Job was the greatest man in all the East'. – Job 1:3

The story now moves to the 'Court of Heaven' where we overhear God 'boasting' about Job. Almost as if He is saying, "At last the formula has worked! A human being who has turned out all right!" But whenever God has certified a person as blameless and pure, Satan gets up to fight with God's people. Just as God acknowledges Job to be a blameless man, which is a rare honor, the Court Adversary, Satan, says with a sneer in his voice:

'Has not Job good reason to be God fearing? Have you not hedged him round on every side with your protection. Whatever he does you bless. But just stretch out your hand and touch all that he has, and see if he will not curse your face.' – Job 1:9-11

Satan argues that it is through God's unfair protection and blessings that there are many believers in God. If God removes this protection and leaves people free many will move from God. He defies God to set Job free from the clutches of prosperity.

The challenge is thrown down and accepted: "Very well" says the Lord, *'All that he has is in your power, only the man himself you must not touch'.*
– Job 1:12

And so a series of catastrophes occurs in Job's life. Camels, oxen, donkeys

carried away by raiders, sheep destroyed by lightning, children killed by a whirlwind, herdsmen put to the sword or killed by natural disasters. But that is not all. In the second round of the contest - Chapter 2, Job himself is touched. He is afflicted with '*skin ulcers from the soles of his feet to the crown of his head*'. – Job 2:7 They itch so much that he takes a piece of broken pottery and sits scratching himself in the ash-pit on the ground. The hell of a never-ending itch!

Word of his plight reaches Job's friends. Three of them, Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar, and a young man called Elihu, take time off to visit him. When they see him they are so overcome by his predicament that they not only weep but '*...they rip their clothes and cover their head in ashes*'. – Job 2:12

And for a week no one says anything.

Then it all starts bubbling out - Chapter 3. Job breaks the silence and curses the day he was born: *'Why was I not stillborn? Why did I not perish when I came from the womb? Why was I ever laid on my mother's knees or put to suck at her breasts?'* – Job 3:11,12
“Why? Why? Why? Why is it happening to me?”

This outburst cause the three friends – Job 4-31 and the young man – Job 32-37 to criticize Job's attitude and to remind him of what everybody believes: if he really is blameless these catastrophes would not have befallen him.

Eliphaz says, *'Afflictions are the divine penalty for misdeeds.'* – Job 15:20

Bildad declares, *'The lamp of the wicked is snuffed off.'* – Job 18:5

Zophar affirms, '*The mirth of the wicked is brief.*' – Job 20:5

He must be humble, confess his guilt and turn from wrongdoing. – Job 33:14,17. That, of course, Job refuses to do - indeed cannot do - because God himself has acknowledged Job's blamelessness and uprightness.

Today too, relatives, friends, neighbors, well-wishers and people around us give the same reasons for suffering. Their reasoning is based on half baked knowledge of the Scriptures and are like '*worthless physicians*' – Job 13:4, '*miserable comforters*' – Job 16:2 who '*talk nonsense and falsehood*'.

– Job 21:34

And so, we come to the heart of the problem. Why in God's creation do the innocent suffer? In his book '*When Bad Things Happen To Good People*',

Rabbi Harold Kushner says, *'Once we have met Job, once we have been Job we can no longer believe in an all-wise, all-powerful God who guarantees fair treatment and happy endings, who reassures us that everything happens for a reason'*. – Kushner 1983

Indeed, as Dermot Cox points out in his book *'Man's Anger and God's Silence'*, suffering is not the problem, God is. He writes: *'Without a belief in a personal God, human suffering is simply a part of life.'* – Cox 19990, p.11

It is necessary to end the traditional question about innocent suffering and to ask instead: "What kind of God is it that allows arbitrary suffering, that is, suffering not commensurate with wrongdoing? How do we continue to believe in a just God who permits, indeed seems to cause arbitrary suffering?" Before someone protests that arbitrary suffering

is not God's Will, I would emphasize that even a literal interpretation of the story of the Fall in the Book of Genesis does not let God off the hook of responsibility. After all, who put the Forbidden Tree in the Garden in the first place? Further if God has foreknowledge, He would know that man would behave in the way he does and He could presumably have planned His Great Design some other way. But He didn't, He went ahead knowing what would happen.

As I see it, the whole aim of the Book of Job is to emphasize 'arbitrary suffering' - and God's ultimate responsibility for it. Jesus subsequently confirmed this view by his comments on two contemporary tragedies - a massacre by Roman soldiers of a group of Galileans attending a religious festival in Jerusalem and the collapse of a tower at Siloam. About these two incidents

he said: *'Do you imagine that, because these Galileans suffered this fate, they must have been greater sinners than anyone else in Galilee? I tell you they were not. Or the eighteen people who were killed when the tower fell on them at Siloam, do you imagine they were more guilty than all the other people living in Jerusalem? I tell you they were not'.* – Luke 13:1-4

And on another occasion Jesus said precisely and succinctly, *'God makes His sun rise on good and bad alike, and sends the rain on the honest and the dishonest'.* – Matthew 5:45
You cannot get more unfair than that.

God is a God who planned arbitrary suffering as an integral part of His creation.

Yet despite the clear teaching of the Book of Job and the sayings of Jesus,

many Christians expect everything to go relatively smoothly for them. Even though they live in a world of suffering they do not expect it to touch them. How could it? They are, after all, averagely decent people and God in their opinion does not strike out at such. But life's experience - when faced up to - shows that all around us are 'averagely decent people' who are victims of arbitrary suffering.

People who cannot have the children they long for, or whose children die in road accidents or of some rare disease, or who develop a progressive incurable illness in their 30s or 40s, or who are born to starvation or who are maimed or killed in a war not of their own making. Yes, all around us, everyday, there are endless examples of arbitrary suffering.

One particularly poignant example was that of a 68 year - old man dying of

lung cancer. He had 4 children, 3 girls and 1 boy. All the girls suffered from an inherited disease that led to liver failure. One died as a teenager; the second survived to marry but died a few years later in her mid 20s; the third has had a liver transplant and is still alive. The son was not affected. But then, 2-3 months after the father was diagnosed as having inoperable terminal cancer, the son was killed in an accident at work.

And so we are forced to move on in our understanding of what God wants and to say with the poet:

*'We know that faith does not exempt
us from sorrow
or shield us from evil - we know that;
we know too,
that the earth is wet with the blood of
the innocent - but
why this ? Why now? Why?*

*Know this, God knows this: if faith
were dependent
on feelings, if our trust in you were no
more than
a matter of the mind, we would have
done with you,
done with you now, done with you
for ever.' – Falla 1981*

Job was equally vehement - and horrified
his "sound" theological companions,
who reminded him repeatedly what
everybody knows: if he really is
blameless, the catastrophes he has
suffered would not have befallen him.

A similar vehemence is found in C.S.
Lewis' 'A Grief Observed', a book
written shortly after the death of his wife.
In it, he says: '*Where is God? Go to
him when your need is desperate,
when all other help is vain, and what
do you find? A door slammed in your
face, and a sound of bolting on the*

inside. After that, silence. What can this mean? Why is He so present a commander in our time of prosperity and so very absent a help in time of trouble?’ (p. 9)

He goes on: ‘Not that I am in much danger of ceasing to believe in God. The real danger is of coming to believe dreadful things about Him. The conclusion I dread is not ‘So there’s no God after all,’ but ‘So this is what God’s really like. Deceive yourself no longer’.’ (p. 9-10) ‘Supposing the truth were ‘God always vivisects’?’ (p. 26) ‘Supposing he is the Cosmic Sadist, the spiteful imbecile?’ (p. 27) Such words reflect well the words of Job.

But, as you will recall, the Book of Job moves from the dialogue between Job and his friends and a young man – Job 3-37 to God’s point of view – Job 38-41. It moves from two

irreconcilable views of God as seen by man, to God as God sees himself; from 'man's God to God's God'.

And we find that God is not primarily concerned to refute what Job has said. Instead, he presents a parallel argument. God sees it from a different angle. Quite often agreeing with Job's perception of the world, God sees it as mystery rather than absurdity.

After God finished his verbal masterpiece about the creation - which spreads over 4 chapters - Job accepts that in his diatribe against God he did not win the argument - Job 40:3-5 and Job 42:2-6. What he does win, however, is God's commendation for honesty.

Job refused to accept the unacceptable religious orthodoxy of his day. For this God commends him, as God repudiates

the 'orthodox' theology of his friends. We read, that when the Lord had finished speaking to Job, he said to the friends, *'...my anger is against you, because, unlike my servant Job, you have not spoken as you ought about me.'* – Job 42:7

Many of us get embroiled in the knots of orthodox theology, theories analyzing the nature of God, therapies that soothe the mind and offer false hopes that turn our mind away from the True Light.

God is concerned not with our actions, but with our reactions. In the midst of persecution and suffering, what is our response to God? Is our response in line with God's Will or is it an extension of the response of the world?

Job's triumph was to recognize life's unfairness, to turn away from his narrow-minded friends and to challenge the God who caused his suffering.

God's triumph was to move Job beyond his own point of view to a vision of the divine purpose in the unfairness. Innocent suffering does not imply divine injustice. It implies something else. It is man, not God, who seeks to create a 'logical world'. 'Order' and 'reason' are fictions man imposes on God's world for his own comfort. God does not simply allow unfairness - it is one aspect of the world he created and is essential to its development.

The Book of Job evolves a new theology of suffering and a new concept of God: **pain as the creative dimension of the divine artist.** Suffering, unreason, unfairness are part of the world order, not a negation of it. One either accepts this or finds a substitute God. God is a God who allows predator and prey to occupy the same living space. He is the God who has created darkness as well as light,

pain as well as joy. We, of course, are not Job. We have a fuller and more challenging revelation of God in Jesus Christ **'the Servant King'**.

What is God like? God is like Jesus. Christianity is not about an empty cross and an empty tomb. It is about a crucified Christ and a risen Lord. The two must be held in conjunction if we are to be true to the insights of the New Testament, in which Jesus is described as: *'The Lamb slain since the foundation of the world'*.

—Revelation 13:8

Others have repeated this theme. For example: *'Jesus will be in agony until the end of the world'*. —Pascal *'You who weep, come to this God, for he weeps'*
—Hugo *'The cross is eternal. There was a cross in the heart of God before there was one planted outside Jerusalem'*.
—Lev Gillet 1954 *'My only real God is*

the suffering Father revealed in the sorrow of Christ' –Studdart Kennedy 1918. And as St Paul said: 'The whole created universe in all its parts groans as if in the pangs of childbirth'.

– Romans 8:22

I conclude with a piece entitled
'Answered Prayer'

I asked for strength - and God gave me
difficulties to make me strong.

I asked for wisdom – and God gave
me problems to learn to solve.

I asked for prosperity - and God gave
me brain and brawn to work.

I asked for courage - and God gave me
dangers to overcome.

I asked for love - and God gave me
troubled people to help.

I asked for favors - and God gave me
opportunities.

I received nothing I wanted; I received
everything I needed.

My prayer has been answered.

Like Job, those whose lives have been steeped in suffering, who have borne untold agony, who have faced painful tragedies have been blessed by the Lord - blessed in their belief - blessed that they have seen and heard God.

'My ears had heard of you, but now my eyes have seen you.' – John 42:5
So do not fight suffering and it will fail to affect you for He is greater than great, more loving than love and closer than close.

SHALOM

'Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you: not as the world gives, do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.'

— John 14:27

The word 'Shalom' belongs to the Hebrew language. Shalom means peace. It is an expression of greeting used by Hebrews when they meet each other and is a sincere expression of comfort and assurance that God is with each person.

When God created man and woman he created them in harmony with nature and with Him. This peaceful harmony was disturbed when Adam and Eve disobeyed God, ate the forbidden food and were consequently thrown out of their paradise in Eden. Since the banishment of Adam and Eve from the

Garden of Eden, peace has eluded man.

Through the ages many prophets carried the message of peace from God but man was too involved with himself and with material issues to realize and accept that peace is a gift from God. Finally God sent His only Son Jesus Christ to bring the message of love, peace and salvation to man.

At his birth, two thousand years ago, angels appeared to men with the message '*Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to men.*' – Luke 2:14 This declaration by angels reveals that people on earth lacked peace and comfort in the world. People were distressed and disturbed. Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior showed the way for man to attain peace but few have understood and applied it in their lives. The book of Philippians chapter 4 in the New Testament written by St. Paul, reads,

'May the peace which passes all understanding keep you in Jesus Christ.'

The state of the world today is alarmingly disharmonious to God's Will. The increasing desire to acquire wealth and other material assets has widened the distance between God and man. People have developed a sense of self-sufficiency and do not feel the need of God. This feeling of self-sufficiency has been detrimental to man's peace of mind. People are distressed about their families, future, the future of their children, the problems at work, injustices etc. The lack of peace is a universal problem.

Each person who comes into the world has his cross to bear. Only the nature of the problem differs from person to person, family to family, community to community, society to society, nation

to nation and culture to culture. Indians are known to eat hot and spicy food that the Westerners find impossible to swallow. This spicy food creates many stomach ailments. The Westerners do not use much chilly in their food. They are less prone to stomach problems. But they eat a lot of cheese and other fatty foods that gives them high cholesterol, high blood pressure and many related heart problems.

The problems that most people in the third world countries like India face arise due to economic reasons. The standard of living in the countries of Asia and Africa is very low. This struggle for survival has created many problems. People get caught in a vicious circle of poverty, crime, sin and Godlessness. The people in the West don't have much financial problem. When you compare the poorest man in the west with a poor man in the Third World the poor man in

the west is rich. In the west a poor man is probably one who does not own a house or a car. Poverty in the Third World implies a situation where people do not have even one meal to eat a day, no proper clothes to cover their bodies, no shelter to protect them from the vagaries of nature and no medicines to heal them. Eighty percent of the people in South Asia and Africa belong to this category. In these harsh conditions people do not even want to listen about God let alone acknowledge His presence.

India is a land bound tight by traditional values and customs. Though change has been an integral part of the society this change has been comparatively slow and has not permeated all layers of Indian society. Within India itself there are a host of cultures, cultures of the 27 different states, an urban culture, a rural culture etc. Though freedom is a

fundamental right according to the Constitution of India individuals experience only restrictive freedom. Familial ties are strong and most places (especially rural areas) practice the extended family system.

Despite the advantages of a joint family many are now turning towards the nuclear family system. This transition causes myriad problems within and outside a community. People are more conscious of man-made societal norms than in knowing and doing God's Will. In such a context people think freedom is the answer to their problems which will give them happiness and peace. On another plane, the western world boasts of a lot of freedom. It is more of an individualistic society where children are not bothered about parents after they reach their teens and want to lead their own lives. Yet due to this excessive freedom, which the Indian society

craves there are divorces, children get separated from their parents, some suffer from identity crises and there are increasing psychological problems. We have analyzed both situations and there is not much peace and happiness in either circumstance.

Every individual has his own way of dealing with his or her troubles. One of the more common ways to deal with unhappiness is to turn to alcohol or drugs. Yes, both these addictive habits give peace and a sense of nothingness for a short time, but when the intoxication wears off all the problems remain and you turn to these things again, making it a weakness in your lives. People soon become addicts and associations are formed to cure people of these dreaded habits that inflict physical and mental harm. Others find lesser destructive ways to ease the tensions from their lives but do not

succeed in getting the lasting peace that the whole of mankind is seeking. None of these temporary solutions help in dealing with the difficulties of life. On the contrary, they postpone the real issues until they get so warped in the fabric of life that they entangle every step that they take. Therefore the answer lies not in inculcating escapist habits to drown our sorrows in, because our problems will be over only when we are buried 6 feet under the earth. The answer lies in accepting life's situations and developing our faith in God who provides the peace that passes all understanding. Until that time we continue to ask, 'Why God Why?'

This peace is evident in one of the letters we received from a reader:

'My husband and I had only one child, Sophia. She was born with a genetic disorder and required much medical

care. After two years, 12 surgeries, and biweekly appointments with some of her 10 physicians, she began to thrive. She learned to sit up, crawl, and talk, and was learning to walk. We had a very deep relationship with our daughter even though she was so young. People often commented on the trust and intimacy my husband and I shared with her.

In October 1996, our lives changed dramatically. Our daughter had a seizure causing permanent brain damage. The medical care she had received at that time was less than adequate and her seizure was allowed to continue for four hours. She appeared to suffer badly for the next couple of months. She would cry incessantly for two or three days at a time, appearing to be writhing in pain. She did not seem to know us or respond to us. She had enough brain capacity

to experience all of the miserable changes her body had gone through, but, it seemed, not enough to receive the love and comfort we so desperately wanted to give her. We had private duty nurses to help care for our daughter. One nurse could not understand why we were not angry with God for allowing this to happen to our only daughter. I tried to help her see that we are His servants and could not deny the tremendous gift that God had given us in His Son. Four months after her seizure, Sophia died. Thank God she died peacefully in her bed with many friends and loved ones around her.

The day she died I was sitting at my desk after making many phone calls to tell people of her death. I had on my bulletin board a picture from our Mission magazine of a sister whose breasts had been cut off and was sitting in obvious malaise next to her infant.

Her persecutors tortured her and others like her by doing this horrible thing, forcing her to watch her child starve to death. Thousands of miles away from where she was, I knew her pain and I wept thinking, I will not allow myself to wallow in self-pity and I will not think of myself more highly than I ought. That sister and others like her did not have the benefit of the medical care, fellowship, and love from brethren that we had. Yet they have endured so much, and I by the grace of God can also endure it.

I need these living epistles to the Lord Jesus Christ to express the reality that Jesus lives and this world is not my home. Our citizenship is in heaven and our family is those who do the will of God. God is just and He will reward justly all those who suffer for His name. This kind of suffering is an honor that I cannot say I have had the privilege

to experience, but with each life I hear about through our mission I am reminded that He is worthy of nothing less. When or if this honor is permitted me, I hope I am as faithful as these brothers and sisters have been. I remember their chains because I cannot forget them.'

– Vicky R., Pennsylvania, USA

Children are often stubborn by nature. If they see something they want they will not rest until they get it. They cannot understand why they cannot get what they desire. However, as soon as you buy the fancied item the face of the child gets transformed. He is full of ecstasy. Though all parents try to fulfill the wishes of their children there are some demands they cannot meet. Even the world's best parent is not able to provide a child with what he wants all the time. There are occasions when one has to refuse to give in to the child's demands. At that

time, the face of the child will change dramatically, some cry, some throw tantrums, some sulk and some fight. They will not stop and think of the 99% of the times when you have yielded to their requests but only remember the times when they don't get what they want. We also behave like children in the eyes of God. God is our Father who has given us life. He protects us, he blesses us with abundant grace but he also gives us sufferings that he knows will make us stronger in faith. Amidst problems and sufferings we begin to flounder in our faith, we despair and turn against God. At such times it is important to remember the words of a hymn,

*When upon life's billows you are
tempest tossed,
When you are discouraged thinking all
is lost,
Count your many blessings name them
one by one*

*And it will surprise you what the Lord
has done.'*

It is written in the Bible, whenever suffering increases grace also increases. All of us are aware of problems surrounding us but hardly anyone reacts to the sufferings of others. Today when I heard the news of the massacre of 35 Sikh men in Jammu & Kashmir, I was shocked at the brutality of the crime. I sympathized with the relatives of the dead. But I did not feel the intensity of the pain, which the near and dear ones of the victims would be feeling. Their grief is beyond comprehension. In such tragic situations how does one feel the grace of God. How does one get the courage to bear such untold misery?

The quirk of fate is that one can experience the peace from God only in the midst of crises. This is the promise which people who believe in God enjoy

- the unique gift of peace in the midst of troubles and tribulations.

When I was a small boy my mother wanted me to become a priest. I was terrified of her ambition for me. As a child I was very timid and sensitive. Whenever anyone would die in my village I would be reduced to tears. I could not control myself. I told my mother, "I never want to become a priest because if I am a priest whenever anyone dies I will have to perform the funeral. Before the relatives cry or any of the family cries the priest will fall down". From childhood I was scared of suffering and death but God used me through all my suffering to tell people all over the world that **the peace which transcends all understanding gives immense strength to overcome all trials and tribulations.**

When my son died friends and well-

wishers came to my home, crying. Some of them were wondering how to comfort us in our sorrow but astonishingly by the grace of God I was filled with strength and I could comfort them. During my son's funeral service, my wife and I were able to witness about the Gospel of resurrection and hope in Jesus Christ as we stood in front of the body of our son. I was blessed to encourage all those who had gathered to join in two of my favorite choruses, which my mother had taught me.

*'Hurricanes raging in this wild forest,
My Master do not leave me alone.
Eagerly coming into your presence,
Solve my problems and bless me now.'*

and,

*'Believer do not be tired,
Believer do not be troubled.
By faith alone, the righteous
Shall live today and evermore.'*

After reaffirming my Christian faith I spoke to the grief-stricken gathering, to help face the reality of death. I explained my great loss using this illustration that is taken from 'Geetanjali', a famous work by Rabindranath Tagore. There was once a beautiful garden that was the pleasure and envy of many. The flowers in the garden were so unique that this garden was maintained just for exhibition. At the entrance of the garden a bold sign issued a warning to all not to pluck the flowers. Amidst the people who had come to enjoy the bounties of nature in the garden one person ignored the warning and plucked the best flower from the garden. Aghast at this action and the blatant disobedience of the person, the onlookers questioned him. Smilingly he introduced himself as the owner of the garden. Similarly, the owner of the human garden reserves His right to make a choice pick according

to His will. This time the choice was Michael. Though shattered by the loss of our son we accepted God's Will without question. He gave Michael to us and He took him away according to His Will. We were able to fortify ourselves with our faith only because we experienced the peace that passes all understanding. This peace we experienced was exemplified in my request to all present to clap their hands and say "Hallelujah" to give a glorious farewell to Michael on his transition into the Eternal Home. I equated his Homegoing to the experience of sending children to a foreign land, for education or work and felt we were only sending Michael to a foreign land – Heaven.

In one of his books Campbell Morgan has written, *'Only the crucified man can speak about the crucified Christ'*. Several servants of God never know the pain of suffering and crucifixion,

especially suffering in poverty. Such things are impossible to experience in Western countries. Even some theologians mislead the essence of the Gospel by preaching about the prosperity Gospel. The prosperity Gospel promises a believer wealth and good fortune if a person turns towards God. This promise of good fortune has turned many people towards God but this is only a part of God's message. In India conversions resulting from such preaching are met with strict disapproval and stern action. People have misunderstood the concept of conversion and political figures have used this misunderstanding to further their cause. The Indian society, bound as it is with tight tradition, takes a very censured view of people changing from one faith to another and even from one ideology to another. In such a situation if a person turns to Christ he will face intense problems and persecution unless

his whole group or village turns to Christ. It is very difficult for only one man to turn to Christ. I have seen and known a few highly educated converts from Hinduism and most of them have experienced severe persecution. Some even lose the balance of their mind but they are ready to sacrifice everything because they have also experienced the peace that passes all understanding.

Our broken hearts and lives are a blessing to several people. I have undergone several sufferings in my childhood and youth and you will see several illustrations of these in my biography, 'His Master's Job'. I had a friend, late Mr T S Mathai from a place called Konny in Kerala. Whenever he shared about difficulties in his life and ministry with me I would give him an example from my life to reassure and strengthen him. He would tell me, "You have an example to give for every

problem". When I met his distraught wife and children after his death I did not have any words to comfort them. Today I am eligible to comfort them or anyone who has gone through bereavement because I have gone through the pain of losing my son. Only a crucified man can preach about a crucified Christ. Through my son's death today I am more qualified to preach about the crucified Christ.

Small children have an avid curiosity. If you take them to a store they will bombard you with questions. What is this? What is that? How does this work? Why do you buy this? We get tired of answering their questions but they never get tired of asking them. I have gone through this experience many a time when I have gone shopping with my sons. Many questions can be answered but there are always one or two questions that cannot be answered

because the child does not have the capacity to understand. As the child grows up and understands the ways of the world he gains greater knowledge. The nature of his questions change and the ability to answer him satisfactorily also increases due to his expanding knowledge. Similarly, a strong believer grows and gains maturity in the knowledge of God's ways when he goes through the cauldron of pain and suffering - a maturity that comes with the knowledge that God has a great purpose in every step he takes.

Jesus Christ, the Son of God who came to this earth for redemption of the entire mankind suffered utmost humiliation and suffering during his life on this earth. Being the Son of God did not spare him from the pain of physical torture and mental agony. *'Although he was a son he learned obedience from what he suffered.'* – Hebrews 5:8

He suffered like all of us. While he was carrying his cross to Golgotha where he was to be crucified, he stumbled and fell. He did not have the energy to pick himself up and carry the cross again. He was beaten severely until he had no strength left. At this moment a man called Simon of Cyrene came forward and carried the cross for Jesus. If a human being like Simon helped the Savior of the world then how much more would the Savior himself comfort us and take our cross when we are in difficulties? The Saviors' presence provides us with the peace to forget our troubles in the midst of crisis.

Another example from the life of Jesus Christ explains the truth behind all the troubles and unhappiness that we on this earth have to face. On two occasions, Jesus Christ took bread, blessed it and distributed it to the hungry. Once he gave five loaves to 5000 people.

Another time he used one bread to distribute to his twelve disciples. On both occasions he first took bread, blessed it, broke it and gave it to others. He was able to feed 5000 people with five loaves and 12 people with one loaf. Without breaking, the bread could not be distributed. When God's people are broken He wants to distribute them to several people who have not found the blessing of peace.

I have been a speaker of the Word of God for the last 37 years but the most powerful message I have spoken was after my son's death. It proved to be a source of comfort to several thousand people. I was able to witness this on the eighth day following the funeral when I had gone to Yemen for a preaching assignment. I was amazed at the response of the gathered crowd. Before I even started preaching people were filled with the Spirit of God and the

divine presence. I realized that more than the message I was to preach; my presence itself was a message of infallible faith in God. In October when I visited Denmark one of the pastors, Rev. Jens, told the crowd, "If you don't get the vision of Heaven, after hearing Dr. Job's sermon you will never be able to reach Heaven". Yet again, in November 1999, when I was in Brazil and preached at several places in the capital Brasilia, churches and stadiums were packed and I saw people coming forward, kneeling down and surrendering their lives for Jesus Christ even before the meeting drew to a close. I understood then how the Lord was using me and my son's death to turn many people to Him.

The Gospel of St. Matthew, chapter 14 relates the story of Peter, a disciple of Jesus, walking on water. But soon after he got out of the boat and began to walk

on water, he began to sink. When we examine how he managed to walk on water and why he began to sink we come across some conclusions that will help us understand how to obtain the peace that God has to offer to man. It was Peter's faith in Jesus that enabled him to walk on water. But as Peter walked on the water, something happened that took his attention off Jesus and caused him to begin to sink. The waves began thrashing about, and Peter wavered in his faith. The overwhelming circumstances caused Peter to sink.

Like Peter, we begin to sink when we take our attention off Jesus and instead focus our attention on the circumstances around us. Focusing on what we see and feel deprives us from God's gift of peace. When we begin to pay attention to the waves of depression, sadness, sickness, disease and small bank

accounts that roll against the shores of life each day we flounder in our faith. When we allow the pressures of life to take our focus off Jesus, we will no longer be able to walk in perfect peace. The Bible gives the condition for walking in perfect peace.

He will keep in perfect peace, him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in Him. – Isaiah 23:3

Peace of mind depends on whether or not we are able to keep our minds steadfast in Jesus. As children of God we don't have to be swept under by any crisis in the world. The Spirit of Fear should not get hold of us.

We have not been given the spirit of fear, but we have been given the spirit of love, power and a sound mind.'

– 2Timothy 1:7

We have peace in the midst of life's

storms because Jesus gave us His peace. Mr. Chandy, a former religious writer in Malayala Manorama, a leading newspaper of India, has written a book called 'Today's Thoughts'. It is a daily reading devotional book. My wife is a regular reader of this book. On the night of 20th June 1999 as my wife and I were speeding towards Dehra Dun after hearing about our son's accident she suddenly remembered a passage she had read in the book.

The message revolved around a story of a mother who had lost her only son in an accident. Several people came to comfort her. The pastor of the church also came to console her. Seeing the pastor, the distraught mother asked him, "Where was my God when my son died?" The pastor was quiet for a minute and then answered the mother, "God is in the same place as He was when His only Son was being crucified and when

your son died". As we remembered this passage we were enveloped with an overpowering sense of peace. We knew where our Lord was - that He will never forsake us.

When John F. Kennedy Jr. was killed in an air crash, reporters besieged evangelist Billy Graham's home in search of answers to the tragedies that the Kennedy family had faced. Among the many questions put to him, one question was, "Why do you think God has taken so much from the Kennedy family?" Billy Graham solemnly answered, "Why don't you think about how much God has given the Kennedy family?"

God showered several blessings on me and my family and he has taken back only one of the several blessings - my son Michael.

The Peace that God gives is not a message of preaching but an experience in daily life - an experience invaluable to the spiritual life of a believer making him eligible to partake in the Heavenly gift of eternity.

VANITY

'Vanity of vanity, everything is vanity.'

– Ecclesiastes 8:8

Over five billion people walk this earth and the number is growing every second. A vast number of species of animals, birds, reptiles coexist on this earth with man. Our planet Earth is but one of the nine planets in the solar system of this universe and our universe is only one among the many universes in the cosmos. And God is the Creator of all.

Creation in its entirety is so vast that it is impossible to fathom its enormity. Years ago we had arranged a meeting at Talkatora Stadium in New Delhi for Neil Armstrong, the first man to land on the moon. During his speech Armstrong described his feelings when he looked to the earth from the moon. The earth

looked no bigger than a tiny marble. A small marble amidst thousands of other spheres that constitute the universe. This tiny marble contains five billion people. How important then is one man in this whole cosmic system created by God? How significant is the existence of a man or woman in comparison to the functioning of the universe? On what basis is man so proud of himself and his achievements? Seen as a part of the entire universe are we not but a tiny speck in the whole cosmic order?

Man's self-importance in being the most superior creation of God is at the core of all vanity. But vanity in man can develop due to many reasons. Some people are proud of the fame they attain in the world. How permanent is this fame? Name and fame may last for some generations but after a span of few centuries no one even knows about them. How many of us know about our

great grand parents? How much do we know about them - how they looked, lived, dressed, worked, what kind of people they were? Are we even interested to know about them? Mahatma Gandhi, the Father of India, is one of the most esteemed figures in the history of the world. How many of us know about his life? As time goes on less and less will be known about him. Today itself the new generation hardly knows anything about him. In another 100 years will anyone acknowledge the contribution of the Mahatma to India? Fame is but a temporary phase of popularity, relevant at a time but which soon passes with the passage of time.

Intelligence is another quality that makes people proud. Scientists, doctors and researchers have made discoveries and inventions that have led to massive changes in the life styles of people.

Every new innovation has made a major impact on man. The most important invention of the 20th century was the computer, which has revolutionized society. It has touched nearly all facets of modern life. It is indeed a great device made by man. A common man uses only 2% of his total brain capacity. A brilliant scientist like Einstein used 5% of his brain. But is the brain of man any comparison to the work of God? Is it possible to even understand how this world was created with its millions of creatures?

There has always been an emphasis on physical beauty more than inner beauty. Beauty enhancement has great appeal to all. At present there is a plethora of beauty parlors to improve looks, gymnasiums to increase fitness, have a longer life and look younger, beauty contests that choose the most beautiful man or woman in the world. How long

does the facade of beauty last? By world standards - not even one year, or else beauty contests would not be held every year.

In the heart of New Delhi is situated a luxury five star hotel called the Taj Palace. It is a very tall and impressive building. Opposite to this hotel is a cemetery, the Prithvi Raj cemetery where my mother and son are also buried. While the Taj is symbolic of all the material pleasures of life, the cemetery reflects the stark reality of life. One day we might check into the finest room of the hotel and the other day we could be lying in the cemetery. What use then are the mundane pleasures of life that man seeks to attain?

How important is the 'I'? According to the Vedantas, one of the religious books of the Hindu religion, life is maya - an illusion. There is no reality in life.

Christianity holds a different view. Life is a reality but exists only for a fleeting moment. Just as childhood passes into youth and youth into old age so must this life pass into eternity.

Time is a very relative term. For man 24 hours make a day, 7 days a week, 30 days a month and 365 days a year. These demarcations of time periods are man made. God's time is vastly different from man's time. The Bible says, for God, one thousand years are like one day. The average life of a person therefore represents not even one eighth of a day on God's timescale. During our lifetime if we visit a place just once, for three or four hours, do we form any lasting attachment to it? Do we even remember the place after ten or twenty years? Such is the likeness to our earthly life.

At the root of all vanity is fear and

selfishness. People fear many things, some fear heights, some fear closed places, some fear water and still others are afraid of death but the greatest universal fear is the fear of the unknown. Man therefore puts all his energies and interests in his immediate environment, which is this world because he does not know what will happen to him after his death. This is also the reason why man continues to pursue mundane desires even though he realizes the futility of his desires.

The Word of God banishes fear from the minds of believers. Though the Bible has been written by many people and compiled over a period of time it contains the phrase 'Fear Not, I am with you' 366 times - one for each day taking into consideration even a leap year. God has made the promise of His reassuring presence to all for all days of our life on earth.

Selfishness, the second reason for vanity, develops because of man's instinct to preserve and sustain himself. Our prayers to God concentrate on pleadings and petitions. We spend very little of our prayer time in praising God and thanking Him for all His blessings. According to the Buddhist religion, man should kill his desires. Only when all the desires for the world are killed can one experience the peace that God has to offer.

But Christ came into the world with a different message. There is no need to kill the desires of the world because the Lord's promise of the Heavenly gift of eternity is so beautiful that man will automatically forget the trappings of the worldly life.

I am a native of the state of Kerala, a state so lush and beautiful that it is called 'God's own country'. It is situated in

the southern part of India. Kerala is a state, which rates as the most literate state in India. There are many doctors, engineers, nurses and highly qualified people. But the chances of employment are comparatively less. Over the past two decades there has been an increasing migration of people from Kerala to America, Europe and mainly to the Gulf countries since the remuneration is double and triple of what one would get in India.

I know of many families where the wife is working in the Gulf while her husband and small children are living in Kerala or vice versa. Most of them cannot come back to India within a year or two. What a sacrifice they make for the sake of money? At the airport one can witness many emotional scenes when a loved one is going abroad. Despite the sorrow and pain of separation hundreds of people continue to leave for foreign

countries in search of better opportunities. Why do they willingly undergo such unhappiness? They are ready for such sacrifice because of the promise of a better future for themselves and their families. The troubles seem trivial in comparison to the joys that a few years of toil would bring. Similarly, when you get a vision of Heaven your vanity about yourself and this world will disappear, personal desires will not get priority but the peace of God and the desire to do God's Will rule your heart. The desire of this world does not need to be deliberately vanquished; it will vanish by its own accord in the face of the promise of eternal life.

The Bible describes the story of Lazarus, a dear friend of Jesus who was brought back to life by Jesus. When Lazarus fell sick, his two sisters Mary and Martha sent a message to Jesus to come and heal their brother. Jesus was

far away and could not reach Lazarus on time. He could reach only four days after Lazarus' death. By then Lazarus' body was already kept in a tomb. Jesus went to his tomb and ordered the onlookers to roll back the stone covering the tomb. Mary and Martha begged Jesus not to go inside since the body would have begun decaying. There is a Jewish belief that the Spirit of a dead person remains on the earth till three days after his death. Since the three days had past Mary and Martha wondered why Jesus wanted the tombstone to be removed. Jesus however stood outside the tomb and called out Lazarus' name. Moments later Lazarus walked out of his tomb still draped in his shroud. After his resurrection Lazarus never smiled, so awed was he by what he had experienced after his death. His desire for the world disappeared and he was only waiting for the day when he would experience the

joys of Heaven again. Lazarus was a great witness in Bethania and all over Palestine. Enemies of Jesus tied him and his sisters and put them in a boat for Cyprus. The whole Christian community in Cyprus is the follower of Lazarus.

The truth about our life on earth is reflected in the perishable composition of our bodies. This body made of flesh and blood will return to dust when we die. What will pass into the next life will be our Spirit.

In one of his messages, Richard Wurmbrand with whom I have been working for the past 30 years, wrote, *'Jesus had His hands and feet immobilized on a cross. He could not move them, but in the spirit he was free. In the spirit, while nailed to the cross. He saved a robber near Him and He saved you and everybody. You just have*

to accept this salvation which He has given. Then He died on the cross. When you die, everything is finished with the body; but everything has not finished with the spirit.

Christ calls every one of us to this wonderful world of the spirit. I was in prison with many former millionaires. I was a poor man and never owned a bicycle, not to speak of a car. Once they entered into prison, they discovered how poor they had been. The millions had been taken away from them and they had nothing left. The treasure which I had, Christ within me, the hope of glory, the communists could not take away.

I took my millions with me to prison. I had my luxury. I had my joy in prison. They could not have it any more. I danced in prison for joy. If I would not have danced, my heart would have

broken in pieces. What was my joy? It was the joy of the bride being in the embraces of the Bridegroom. The joy of receiving His holy kiss. The joy to see yourself encompassed by holy angels.

Usually when I am introduced, it is said this is our dear brother who has suffered 14 years of prison. I have the impulse to smile because I know that I have been 14 years in paradise. I have been with Jesus. I have been with the angels. In the Spirit there are unlimited possibilities. In the end, material things, even if you have very much of them like the rich man about whom the Bible speaks, are only crumbs. Jesus speaks about the rich man and Lazarus. They both belonged to the same world. The one had material things. The other desired material things. They were both desirous only of material things.

These you will have to leave behind. You might not be arrested, but you will have to die, and everything remains here. Poverty or wealth, sickness or health, youth or old age, liberty or prison, life or death, make no difference to the spirit. The spirit cannot be killed. The spirit is free. If it is cleansed by the blood which Jesus Christ shed for us, it will be eternally in a beautiful paradise. I know this paradise not only from the promises of Jesus. I know this paradise because I come from there..'

St. Paul has written in the Bible, 'I would like to fly away from this shell'. He says this after hearing the experience of his friend who he says was taken to the third Heaven. The third Heaven signifies that he had experienced a magnificent Heaven that made Paul desire Heaven more than his life on earth.

Though it is frightening to acknowledge

the obvious insignificance of one's worldly existence it is assuring to know that **our existence on this earth is but a brief interlude - a preparation for our everlasting life in Heaven.** This is not a time to be proud of what we have, for what we have does not count for anything in God's scheme of ultimate glory. It is also not a time to develop an attachment to this world but a time to gain knowledge about the ways of the Lord through suffering which is made bearable by the peace given by God.

ETERNITY

'For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.'

— John 3:16

Eternity; the magic term that spells the promise of everlasting life; the one thing that God held back from man at the time of Creation. Eternity; the anti thesis of death twinkles like a rare, precious jewel in the distance, beckoning man with its immortality.

The idea of eternal life has fascinated man from time immemorial. Adam lived for 930 years. Noah lived for 950 years, Abraham for 175 years and Moses was 120 years when he died. Today the average life of a person is 70 - 80 years. Some may even live up to 90 or 100

years but the end of every life form on this earth is death. As the life span of humans has been decreasing with each passing century the desire to find out the key to eternal life has been mounting. The temporary nature of life scares everyone and we all ask the same questions - What is there after death? What is eternity? What lies beyond this life on earth? How can a person have eternal life?

The answers to these questions are in the Holy Bible. Christianity is the only religion which explains and proves the existence of eternal life.

Eternal life is a covenant God has made with man. The core of Christian faith is not merely listening to the Gospel, sending up prayers, healing, or spreading the message of the Good News. It is the assurance of traveling with Jesus Christ to eternity after this

mortal life and living with him forever and ever.

The prophet Isaiah has described eternal life in these words, *'Your sun will never set again and your moon will wane no more. The Lord will be your everlasting light and your days of sorrow will end.'*

— Isaiah 60:20

How can one believe this assurance of God? Since man's knowledge does not go beyond death, which is the last contact that the living have with the dead, it is very hard to come to terms with the death of loved ones. As the preacher of the Word of God, I have preached the message of eternity to people all over the world but when my son died the Devil challenged me, "Is there any eternity? Is there any Heaven? Is this the end?" But then my faith assured me that there is a Heaven and eternal life is the final truth. My son is

safe and free from the sufferings of this world. Then I felt no fear about the loss of my son. My faith removed the particle of doubt that had crept into my mind at the most vulnerable moment.

What is the proof that life exists after death? The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is proof of the promise that God has made with man.

The Bible recounts two types of resurrection. The first type of resurrection was the resurrection of Lazarus. He was brought back to life by Jesus to prove that resurrection is possible through God. But Lazarus was brought back to life in his earthly form and died again.

The second type of resurrection is the resurrection of Jesus Christ, which gives us a glimpse of the eternal life that believers in Christ can look forward to. It is the example of what will happen to

us at His second coming. After dying a humiliating death on the cross for the sins of all mankind, Jesus rose again on the third day after his death.

After his resurrection Jesus appeared to his disciples many times before his ascension to Heaven. His first appearance was to Mary Magdalene. He then appeared to two of his disciples while they were walking on the road to Emmaus. The third time he appeared to eleven of his disciples while they were sitting in a room. He then made a special appearance for Thomas who was not present at the earlier appearance and refused to believe that Jesus had risen from the dead. Jesus then appeared to a crowd of 500 people to prove beyond doubt that he had resurrected. Jesus appeared ten times to the people after his resurrection. These appearances proved to all that there definitely is life after death.

When I was a child my mother fell seriously ill. She was very critical but there was no adequate medical treatment in our village and we did not have the means to take her to the city. The only thing we did was to pray and wait. She got worse and worse and people started collecting around our house. Soon I came to know that my mother was no more. My brother and I began crying. We did not know what to do and my mother lay on her bed for one hour. Suddenly she began to breathe again and within the next eight hours she became conscious again. As soon as she gained strength to talk she told us of an amazing experience. When she had died and her spirit reached Heaven, she saw her mother's twin sister sitting with thousands of people and worshipping God. When she saw my mother she came out and told her, "You don't have any place here until you give one of your sons to full time Gospel work". My

mother was very sad at being sent back to her earthly body.

After she narrated this, she looked at me and told me that I should be the one to enter Gospel work. Several years passed and I was soon into full time Gospel work. I then had the privilege of acquiring a Doctorate degree. After the convocation, I came back home, still wearing the convocation dress and stood proudly in front of my mother, thankful that I was able to fulfill her desire. She told me, "Now that you have completed your education in theology and have dedicated your life to God - my work is over". She asked me to invite our relatives and close friends and arrange a thanksgiving prayer. Invitation cards were printed in her name as she solicited the blessings of all upon her son. The prayer meeting was fixed for 11th July 1982 at 5 pm. On 9th July she suddenly became ill and was admitted

to Holy Family Hospital in New Delhi. We did not cancel the meeting since we expected her to recover. She left for her Heavenly abode at 12 noon on 11th July and the thanksgiving prayer became a memorial service.

The vision she had when she died was fulfilled through my life. She had done her duty by entrusting the responsibility of spreading the torchlight of the Gospel to me. Many people like my mother who have returned to their earthly bodies after death have narrated similar experiences. Every believer in Christ is thus sure of enjoying Eternal life after his mortal life.

After establishing that there exists a life after death, the next question that comes to mind is: - “When our bodies, that are made of flesh and blood are perishable, in what form will we be resurrected?”

When Jesus rose from the dead he had

a new body - a spiritual body. Jesus was resurrected in his immortal body. Though he looked the same, his body had a different constitution from our mortal bodies. The evidence of this is seen when Jesus entered a closed room where his disciples were sitting. His appearance was made necessary by the unbelief of St. Thomas, one of the disciples of Jesus Christ.

St. Thomas was not just a disciple of Jesus but was also the person who knew Jesus from childhood. Both Jesus and he belonged to Nazareth and they shared such a strong physical resemblance that St. Thomas was called Didymus which means 'twin'. In spite of the closeness he shared with Jesus he refused to believe in the resurrection of Jesus. He told the other disciples who had seen Jesus. *'Until I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his*

side, I will not believe it.'

– John 20:25

A week later, when all the disciples had gathered together again Jesus entered the locked room and appeared to all of them. It is recorded in the gospel of John 20:26, *'Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them.'* He then turned to Thomas and said, *'Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side.'* – John 20: 27. This is the kind of body promised to all believers in Christ after our death.

'The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.'

– 1Corinthians 15:42-44

Death has proved to all, that our life on earth is but a temporary interlude in the journey to eternity. Where is the place where we all will enjoy Eternal life?

'While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into Heaven.'

– Luke 24:51

'...he was taken up into Heaven and he sat at the right hand of God.' – Mark 16:19. Jesus' ascension to Heaven has proved that our next life will be in Heaven where Jesus has gone to prepare a magnificent place for us. Jesus Christ himself assured us of this before his death.

'In my Father's house are many rooms, I am going there to prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.' – John 14:2-3

Is it not a glorious life that is prophesized for us in Heaven? Heaven represents such a happy place with no suffering or pain. Doesn't the promise of such a wonderful place waiting for you remove the fear of death? The Bible describes the story of the stoning of Stephen. Stephen gladly bore the insults and the pain of being stoned to death because of his belief in an Eternal life in Heaven with God. When he died, Heaven opened to reveal the glory of Jesus sitting on a throne and as the Spirit of Stephen entered Heaven, Jesus himself stood up from Heaven and came to greet him. What an Honor!

God gives this wonderful gift of eternity to all without discrimination since God is the Creator of all. But there is a condition that one has to fulfill to receive this gift. This prerequisite is repeated at various instances in the Bible,

'This is the testimony, God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life, he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.' – 1 John 5:11-12

'...he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him.'

– Hebrews 5:9

'...whoever lives and believes in me will never die.' – John 11:26

When you believe this, you will experience three things that can be called the first fruit, the first installment and foretaste. These are the three metaphors that have been used by St. Paul, in connection with the Holy Spirit - our guide to immortality.

In the book of Romans 8:23 it is said that the first fruit is what you get now, on this earth *'...we ourselves, who have*

the first-fruits of the Spirit.’ If you have any fruit bearing tree in your garden you will realize that when spring arrives the tree produces only two or three fruits which will not be as tasty as the others that would come later but it signifies that the tree will bear more fruit in future. What we experience in this life is a kind of Heaven so it is similar to what we will experience in Heaven. In my meetings when miracles take place and the crippled begin to walk and the sick get healed it is a sort of Heaven. The demonstration of His power on this earth is the first fruit that we receive as an indication of things to come.

The first installment is written about in the Bible in the book of Ephesians 1:14 and is also mentioned in the second book of Corinthians 5:5. It is said that ‘...*God has given us the Holy Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.*’ It is like going into a furniture

shop and seeing a beautiful sofa which you want to buy but do not have the money to buy it. So you pay the shopkeeper a certain amount as a deposit to keep the sofa set for you and not sell it to anyone else. The rest of the amount you promise to pay when you come to take the sofa set home. Likewise, the first installment assures us that the second coming of Christ on which our hope lies is a surety, and that we shall be participants in that final glory if we only repent and believe in Jesus as our one and only Savior. By this action we pay the first installment towards buying the eternal life that God has promised to us.

The first foretaste is mentioned in Hebrews 6:4-5 '*...Those who have been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, who have tasted the goodness of the Word of God and the*

powers of the coming age. ' When I was a child, I used to watch my mother cook. After cooking a dish, she would take some in a spoon and taste it to check whether it was lacking in any ingredient. Only when she felt that it was made properly would she give it to us children to eat. Likewise, we have tasted a part of the dish of eternal life in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. He has given us a preview of what would happen to us after death, so that we can look forward with anticipation at the full feast we would enjoy at His final coming.

Heaven and eternity become closer to us when we lose our near and dear ones. I have lost my parents, elder brother and now my youngest son. But my belief that they are in Heaven and I will meet them when I die has kept me strong. Therefore I have the same affinity to Heaven that I have to my life here on

Earth. I have two children. Both of them are far from me. My elder son John is working in the Gulf and my younger son is with Jesus Christ. As long as I am alive I will enjoy being with my son and his family, playing with my grandson and watch him grow. But when I die I shall have no regrets for I will be with my younger son. I will meet my parents and elder brother and I will see some of my friends who have died. There is no reason now to fear death and we can ask,

'Where, O death, is your victory?

Where, O death, is your sting?'

– 1Corinthians 15: 55

What a glorious gift God has given us!
Come let us partake of it!

'Death has been swallowed in victory!'

– 1Corinthians 15:54

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He leads me

**In pastures green? Not always. Sometimes He
Who knows best, in kindness leads me
In weary ways, where shadows be.**

**Only for this - I know He holds my hand;
So whether in green or desert land,
I trust, although I may not understand.
And by still waters? No, not always so,
Off-times the heavy tempests round me blow
And over my soul the waves and billows go.**

**But when the storm beats loudest and I cry
Aloud for help, the Master stands by,
And whispers in my soul - 'Lo, it is I.'**

**So where He leads me I can safely go,
And in the blessed hereafter I shall know
Why, in His kindness, He had led me so.**



**DR. P.P. JOB'S
'WHY GOD WHY?'**

**emerged from the painful
experience of his younger
son's death, to reach out
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